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THE  
FEUDS  
OF  
LUNA & PEROLLO;  
OR, THE  
FORTUNES  
OF THE  
*HOUSE OF PANDOLFINA.*

AN HISTORIC ROMANCE, OF THE SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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Who set this ancient quarrel new abroach?  
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

SHAKESPEARE.

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VOL. I.

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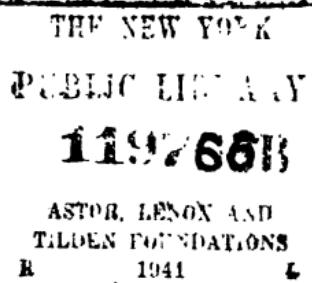
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1847.



## PREFACE.

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THE scenes described in the following pages are accurately detailed from a manuscript which was written by a native of Sciaoca, soon after the events took place, and which was purchased, in 1812, by an English gentleman during his stay in that city.

Similar instances of party hatred and animosity are to be met with in the annals of almost every Italian city during the middle ages. Milan, Padua, Florence, and Turin, were all of them disgraced by outrages equal in

atrocities; but few have been recorded with the same minute particulars as are detailed in the manuscript of the "Casa di Sciacca;" nor could any of them boast a more popular chieftain, or circumstances of more ferocious barbarity: these, dreadful as they may appear, have many of them been softened down in the following work; and throughout the whole, the characters of all the party have been traced with as much fidelity as possible.

The account of Serican is historically true, as are also all the leading events and the circumstances of the catastrophe; nor has the author deviated from the manuscript in any essential point whatever.

The character Accursi d'Amato

may perhaps be supposed too terrific for reality, but he is described as “un uomo d'un diabolico ardore;” and seems, in two or three cases, to have exceeded the measure of iniquity here ascribed to him.

The obstinate perseverance of don Geronimo Statella, in resisting the invitation of Perollo, and their conduct respecting the Imperial troops, are ascribed by the writer of the original manuscript to a fatality which they could not resist; and nothing perhaps but their being strictly true, could have made them credible.

The author is aware that the great interest lies towards the conclusion of the work; but so much previous detail was necessary to make the reader fully

acquainted with all the particulars and characters connected with the story, that it was unavoidable: many persons also, who are slightly mentioned in the original, are altogether left out in the following pages, as likely to produce confusion, from the introduction of so many similar names, as unavoidably occur in the detail of a family feud.

THE  
**FEUDS**  
OF  
**LUNA AND PEROLLO.**

---

**CHAPTER I.**

---

Love, Hope, and Joy, fair Pleasure's smiling train ;  
Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of Pain ;  
These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,  
Make and maintain the balance of the mind ;  
The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife  
Give all the strength and colour of our life.      *Pere.*

IT was on the eve of the feast of Santa Rosalia, in the year 1528, that a large Spanish vessel entered the port of Palermo; and sending on shore a boat from the commander, one of the inferior officers was commissioned to give immediate intelli-

gence at the viceregal palace, of the arrival of the baroness Solanto, who had for some time been expected by his highness the duca di Monteleone, with her husband and family. Business of importance having made the presence of the baron Solanto necessary in Sicily, he had been requested by his friend the viceroy to make Palermo his head-quarters, from whence he could visit any part of the island whither his affairs might call him. The commands of his Imperial master, Charles the Fifth, had however detained the baron on the eve of his departure, and when his family had already embarked; but as the cause of his detention was not likely to be of long duration, he resolved to permit the baroness and his daughter to take advantage of the fair wind, and to follow them as soon as possible. A safe and easy voyage had now brought the baroness to the place of her destination, and she requested the captain to apprise the viceroy immediately of her arrival.

The intelligence being communicated

to his excellency, one of his favourite officers, the young Federico Perollo was directed to wait upon the lady without delay, and to escort her to the palace.

With alacrity he proceeded to execute his commission, and was received by the baroness with all the courtly elegance of the high-born Castilian, free from the unbending formality too generally conspicuous in the Spanish character.

The baroness Solanto, in her manners, was peculiarly gentle and conciliating; and though some time past her prime, still preserved vestiges of a beauty particularly soft and feminine. But her daughter, the lady Costanza di Solanto, to whom the young Perollo was introduced by her mother, attracted his attention most forcibly; brilliant in youth and beauty, he had never seen, amidst all the ladies of the Sicilian court, one whom he thought could be compared with her.

As the boat was conveying the party on shore, the baroness remarked with delight the enchanting scenery which the

shores of the bay presented: the bold promontories of Cefalu and Pelegrino formed the extremities of the amphitheatre, in which the city reared its gay and glittering pinnacles—and the hills of San Martino closed it in with a magnificent background; whilst far away to the east, the towering head of Etna rose proudly pre-eminent. Perollo joined with enthusiasm in the praises of his native island, and expressed the highest gratification at the pleasure with which the ladies contemplated the scene before them. They saw descending from Pelegrino the procession which accompanied the holy relics of Santa Rosalia from her mountain abode to the temporary resting-place prepared for them in the city.

In the serenity of a Sicilian evening, the distant strains of the choristers, swelled by the voices of the multitude who followed, mingled sweetly with the faint murmurs of the waves, as they washed the rocky shore of the Marino. The monks from all the convents in the city, in their va-

rious robes of white, black, and blue, added to the picturesque beauties of the scene; and the banners which were displayed by the attendants, gave to the whole pageant a striking air of splendour and solemnity. The boatmen paused on their oars, and crossed themselves with devotion, as they saw the sacred assembly winding through the craggy pathways of the mountain, now hid from their view by the projecting masses of rock with which their laborious way was encumbered, and now appearing fully displayed in some more open space.

A short and impressive silence was indulged in by all the party, which was at length broken by the baroness inquiring of Perollo if the festival had begun?

“The relics of the saint,” he replied, “will be deposited for the night in the cathedral, and to-morrow our festivities begin.”

The swelling notes of the sacred music again were wafted by the evening breeze

from the mountain-side, and again the party in the boat was silent. The rays of the setting sun had tinted every mountain-head with varying shades of purple, and even the lingering snows of Etna were tinged with a ruddy blush; whilst each rippling wave, as it passed by, was crested with the deep amethystine hue peculiar to the waters of the Mediterranean in the unclouded sunset of a summer eve.

“The Bay of Palermo does indeed exceed all the expectations I had formed of its loveliness,” said the baroness to Perollo, “and fully justifies the encomiums bestowed upon it.”

“Oh, it is—it must be the loveliest sight in nature!” answered Perollo; “the inscription in the Torre Zizza is neither false nor exaggerated.”

“To what do you allude?” asked the lady.

“Westward of the city walls,” he said, “stands an ancient Moorish tower, which some Castilian noble has of late re-edified and embellished; inscribing on its walls,

the proud, but incontrovertible boast—  
“ *That as Europe is the noblest of the divisions of the earth, so is Italy the garden of Europe; Sicily the loveliest of its parterres; and Palermo the fairest of the flowers which adorn it.*”

The baroness smiled at his vehemence, and Perollo, in enthusiastic language, continued to descant on the beauties of the island, and particularly of the present scene, pointing out to their notice the most striking objects it afforded — the dark forms of Mongierbino and Pelegrino rising from the bosom of the waves; the fantastic shape of the hills of La Bagaria; the majestic head of Etna, capped with smoke; and still nearer to their view, the city of Monreale on the mountains behind Palermo; and in the distance, an antique castle, perched on the summit of San Martino.

The baroness listened with gratifying attention, and by the countenance of the lady Costanza, she seemed to partake in some degree of the enthusiastic delight which inspired their young companion,

who, when they reached the shore, regretted the extraordinary rapidity with which they had performed their short voyage.

On the Marino they found a party of the viceregal attendants waiting to conduct the ladies to the palace. Perollo requested that his services might not be dispensed with ; and they being courteously accepted by the baroness, he continued by the side of her palfrey until they reached their destination.

The streets of Palermo were filled with busy preparations for the approaching festival, and all seemed in anxious expectation of the gala on the morrow.

The baroness Solanto was received with distinguished kindness and attention by her illustrious host and the duchessa, to whom she had been long and intimately known ; whilst the admiration excited by the lady Costanza was universal throughout the court.

The festival began on the succeeding evening, when the colossal image of the saint was conveyed, splendidly attired, in a

triumphal car, brilliantly illuminated, through the city. The size of the machine on which it is carried, elevates the figure to a level with the tops of the houses, and in different parts of the car are stationed upwards of an hundred musicians, to the sounds of whose instruments the festive hymns and shouts of the multitude arise in deep and solemn chorus. The court of the viceroy assembled in the archiepiscopal palace to grace the ceremony, and never had it displayed a more magnificent appearance.

The popular character of the duca di Monteleone, and fascinating manners of the duchessa, had endeared them to all ranks in the nation; and the homage due to their high station was paid with affection as well as respect. In the gay circles of Palermo, they appeared continually promoting the cheerfulness and unanimity of the higher classes, whilst shewing every attention and care to the wants and necessities of the lowest of the citizens.

The present occasion had assembled all

the nobles of the metropolis, who seeme to vie with each other in the magnificenc of their appearance. The baroness Solant and her lovely daughter, were objects of attention to all ; and the admiration excite by the latter was not a little heightene by the retiring modesty with which it was received.

During the early part of the evening the young Perollo, who had been more particularly introduced to the strange guests, as a favourite and *protégé* of the viceroy and his duchessa, was unceasinc in his attentions to them, pointing out the most remarkable of the characters which filled the gay scene. They were however continually called away to the numerous persons to whom they were introduced by their highnesses ; and after the first part of the ceremonies was concluded, the presence of Perollo was required in a masque, which was presented by the young nobles of the court, and which consisted of an allegorical representation of the deliverance of Italy from the French by the arms of the

Emperor, and the captivity of Franeis at Pavia: the interposition of the saints in favour of the Imperial cause was maintained in heroic verse, which, with music and dancing, formed the spectacle now presented, and in which one of the most conspicuous parts was sustained by Perollo, with a propriety and grace which called forth general approbation; nor did his new friends, the Solantos, forget their thanks for the pleasure they had received, and certainly their commendations did not seem the *least* pleasing to him: their notice was however soon attracted by the vehemence with which two ladies near them were carrying on a conversation.

“ It is the duchessa Camastra and signora Spinelli, the two most rigid devotees in Palermo,” said Perollo; “ and they appear discussing the merits of their patron saints. The signora is a Neapolitan by birth and education, consequently opposed in all things to the prejudices of her neighbour, one of our first Sicilian dames.”

The baroness was not a little amused by

the lavish abuse with which each of the ladies was endeavouring to load the favourite of the other.

St. Gennario, the patron of Naples, was accused by the Sicilian lady of being infected with a most disloyal spirit, inclining entirely to the Guelphic faction; whilst no one, she proudly boasted, could assert that Santa Rosalia had ever worked a miracle in behalf of any but the staunchest Ghibeline; the patron of Naples had been publicly invoked by Francis himself, and strongly suspected of secretly favouring his cause, had he not been overpowered by the superior sanctity of Santa Rosalia.

“A very good little saint, indeed,” said the signora, “could her legend be authentically made out, and the value of her services really ascertained; but the miraculous blood of St. Gennario, every one must confess, is an eternal monument of its divine origin, and far transcends any thing which has ever been heard or believed of the poor little recluse of Pelegrino; besides, let me ask you, duchessa, by whose

aid was the miraculous victory of Pavia obtained?"

"Oh, Maria, defend me! signora, every one knows that it was through the blessed saints Ildefonso and Rosalia!"

The debate proceeded with increasing violence; each of the disputants apparently well inclined to bestow on her opponent the virulence which she heaped on the object of her adoration, till the superior claims of a *primero table* called them to a different employment: for this amusement however neither the Solanto family, nor the party of the viceroy, had any anxiety.

"The marquis Leonforte requests the honour of being introduced to the wife and daughter of his old friend and fellow-soldier, the baron Solanto," said his highness, presenting to the ladies a cavalier, whom they had not before seen.

"It is some time," said the marquis, "since I saw the baron Solanto; my services have been confined to the Italian war, whilst he has been engaged in the Imperial affairs in almost every nation in Europe."

“ I have frequently heard the baroness mention the marquis Leonforté with sentiments of the highest regard and esteem,” replied the baroness, “ and particularly member the regret which was expressed by him on the subject of your excellency’s wound last year at the capture of Ronciglione from your present appearance, however trust that all is well again, and the only subject of regret, the loss that your confinement proved to the cause of humanity, it having been the general opinion, that the presence and exertion of such an officer might have restrained the violence of the troops during the anarchy of that unfortunate period.”

“ No one could have regretted me more than myself,” replied the marquis, “ in scenes which then disgraced our victorious army; something still must be conceded to those feelings which the loss of our glorious general occasioned, and to the indiscriminate conduct of the pontiff, who, publicly branding the German troops with the name of Lutherans, and the Spaniard

with that of Moors, had excited a personal feeling of hatred and vengeance against his sacred person in every individual throughout the army: his obstinate resistance afterwards within the walls of St. Angelo continued to increase the fury of the conquerors, and no power but that of Bourbon himself could, I fear, have curbed these lawless depredations."

"Your excellenza, I think, was with the duke at the time of his fall?"

"We were wounded nearly at the same instant, and removed to the same spot, where my lamented friend expired by thy side."

"He survived his wound but a short time, I think?" said the lady.

"From the moment he received the ball, he felt the irretrievable consequence, and his chief concern appeared to be, to conceal it from the men; the few words he uttered were expressive of his desire for victory, and pardon for the offences of his mortal enemy, the implacable Louise, who had been the first cause of all his errors and misfortunes."

The marquis remained for some time in conversation with the ladies, who did not return to the palace till a late hour in the morning.

For five successive days, the festivities were kept up with unabated ardour. On the day after the procession, a magnificent masquerade was given at the viceregal palace, to which the principal citizens, as well as the court and nobility, were invited. The lady Costanza di Solanto, habited in the most splendid costume of Spain, outshone all the beauties of Palermo. The grotesque figures of many of the guests, and the magnificence of others, rendered the motley scene particularly amusing to those to whom it could offer the charm of novelty.

The youth of Perollo had permitted him but lately to join in the gaieties of the metropolis; and the lady Costanza had been accustomed, during the absence of her father in his military duties, to the strictest retirement, from which she had never, till the present time, emerged.

She wore a robe of white satin, fitted to her beautiful form, and confined at the waist with a clasp of magnificent brilliants; her fine dark hair, braided with pearls, was partially covered with a fine lace Spanish veil, which was fastened on the top of her head, and fell in light and elegant folds over her whole person. When she entered the duchessa's private drawing-room previous to her party entering the state apartments, her highness could not help extolling the surpassing loveliness of her appearance; nor the duca refrain from some good-humoured raillery, on the malice of determining to destroy the peace of all the court, both male and female.

The blushing Costanza was confused by so much praise; but her mother looked grateful for their approbation of her child.

“ Do you know,” said the duchessa to her lord, “ what is Perollo’s character for the night?”

“ Oh, no,” he answered; “ the disguise of the gallants for this evening is a mystery of more than state importance; so

the ladies must exercise their ingenuity in discovering them."

Almost immediately they repaired to the grand saloon, where all that Italy could produce of splendid decoration was lavishly displayed; and Costanza thought for an instant it must be enchantment—some poetic dreams realized.

The masques now began to arrive in numbers; but every body's attention was arrested by a band of Moors, who making their way to the canopy, gracefully saluted the viceregal party. They were all handsomely attired, yet seemed but as foils to their chief; he appeared from his figure to be young, but being masqued, and not having spoken, they could not guess who he was; he wore a vest and trowsers of rich green silk, embroidered in silver; his belt and dagger-hilt were studded with most costly jewels, and his robe of velvet and beautiful turban completed the costume. Having paid his devoirs to the duchessa, he approached Costanza, and bowing very low, kissed the hem of her

then in a feigned voice, asked her to

ostenza, who had but a few minutes  
re almost determined with herself  
she dare not dance in such an assem-  
felt abashed and unable to answer.  
encouraged by the duchessa, at last  
ented. The dance chosen was a bo-  
in compliment to the lady's Spanish  
She could not but be graceful in  
he did: but at first timidity made her  
ements appear constrained—soon how-

the animation of her partner, the  
ic, the many other couples who began  
ove about her, and, above all, the na-  
l elasticity of youthful spirits, gave to  
manner all the playful graces that  
ing is so capable of admitting. No  
option can do justice to the elegant  
ements of her arms and whole person,  
e lightness with which, in the quicker  
ties of the bolero, she seemed to float  
et in air; beating time with beautiful ex-  
ess with her feet and castanets, she was  
equalled by her partner, who how-

ever seemed too intent on admiring I to think much of himself, and only dance mechanically; still his strikingly-fine figure, and firm yet graceful action, cannot pass unnoticed.

The duchessa was engaged in receiving her guests, and the baroness Solante remained for some short time silently watching the dancers, when her attention was attracted by the conversation of two ladies near her, which at first she listened to, most unconsciously, till at length the interest it excited riveted her to the spot.

“I have no doubt,” said one of them, answer to a question from the other, “that it must be the young Perrelli: there is not a gallant in the court, whose figure, or whose dancing, could be mistaken for don Federico: did you see a thing of his family in your late visit to Sciacca?”

“My connexion with the house of La rendered it impossible to be acquainted with any of the family of baron Pandolfi but in public I had fr

spontaneit

of seeing them, and I think that don Federico bids fair to resemble his father, who, in spite of the abhorrence of my relative, the countess Caltabellotta, is certainly most captivating in his manners and address."

"Is the countess still as amiable and agreeable as ever?"

"Do not mention her, my dear friend; the bare idea makes me shudder; were it not for my regard for don Sigismund, nothing should tempt me to venture again within the walls of Luna Castle; but Sigismund, with all his faults, will ever be an object of affection to his friends."

"The death of the countess Lucretia must have been a great shock to his feelings."

"Perhaps, my dear Antonia, not so severe as may be supposed; her temper too much resembled his mother's, and he himself is not the gentlest of men; besides, there are reports of his having entered into another engagement—but with whom I know not; however, be the lady who she

may, she has my sincerest pity and compassion."

The baroness Solanto gave an involuntary start; the ladies, however, proceeded in their conversation without noticing any one near them.

"Don Sigmund is young, handsome, and rich; report speaks well of him, and I see no reason why he should not be one of the most desirable matches in Sicily."

"To count Luna himself," said the other, "perhaps few ladies would object; but there is something in the countess, his mother, beyond even her temper and manners, which inspires me with a horror indescribable: besides, it is whispered in Sciacca—" Here the speaker lowered her voice, and the baroness looking towards her, saw her companion express the utmost horror at what she heard—at length she said—"Impossible! what motive could excite her to such atrocity?"

"Hatred, Antonia—deadly, implacable hatred, which governs with imperious the actions of the countess."

“ And who is to succeed the ill-fated Lucretia, you have not heard ?”

“ No ; a mysterious silence is preserved in that family on all subjects ; and I believe this is known only to the countess and the baron Adriano.”

“ Geronimo Peralta ?” said the other, in a tone of interrogation.

“ The same ; one of the dearest friends of Sigismund, and one of the most dangerous.”

Some cavalier now approached the ladies and interrupted them.

Deeply interested in all that related to count Luna, the baroness Solanto had in this short conversation heard enough to furnish subject for reflections of no pleasing nature : the father of don Sigismund had been a particular friend of her husband, and she had motives of no small weight to make her wish to discover his real character ; of the temper and manners of the countess his mother, she had before heard very unpromising accounts ; but it

was the disposition and character of the count in which she was most interested. Fame spoke loudly in praise of his personal appearance, of his warm affection to his friends, and devotion to his mother, whose temper frequently put his filial duty to a hard trial. That he was impetuous and headstrong was acknowledged ; but as the baroness did not expect to find him without imperfections, she flattered herself these might be softened down by affection and tenderness. In vain she attempted to persuade herself that what she had just heard was merely the gossip of the day ; but there was no motive to hide or to magnify the faults of those who had been the subjects of conversation.

The dancing having ceased for a time, Costanza was reconducted to her mother by the cavalier with whom she had been engaged, and the reflections of the baroness were by their approach diverted for a time into another channel. With a profound obeisance the gallant Moor expressed his delight at the honour conferred upon him

by the lady Costanza, and disguising his voice as much as possible, he was entering into conversation with the ladies when the old count Jaci joined them.

“ You are too recently come amongst us, baroness Solanto,” he said, “ to be acquainted with the masquers of the court; let me unriddle to you the hidden characters of the night.”

“ The count will use us all most unmercifully,” said the Moor; “ ladies, beware of his satire, and make all the allowance you can for the unfortunate victims he may single out.”

“ Surely you, don Giovanni,” said the count, “ need be under no alarm; we have not, madam, a more discreet cavalier within the walls of the city, than this gentleman, don Giovanni Pescaro.”

“ I had mistaken the noble Moor,” said the baroness, “ for a younger character, don Federico Perollo.”

“ Really,” replied the count, with a smile, “ Federico would be indebted to you, but he has so many objects of adoration

amongst the ladies here, that he would scarcely be able to offer his homage to any new attraction, though he has the character of being the most inconstant of our gallants."

"I never knew," replied the Moor, "that Perollo had any attachment, or was accused by any one of inconstancy."

"Oh! you are not in his confidence, don Giovanni, and mistake the character of Perollo; I can give you a better idea of him."

The Moor impatiently endeavoured to change the conversation, and separate the ladies from their new companion.

The count however most perseveringly kept his ground.—"Yonder," he said, "is the object of our discussion," pointing to one of the band of Moors who had entered with their companion, and who was evidently making vehement love to a lady by whom he was seated.

"Surely you are mistaken," said the Moor; "it is the marquis Roccaforte, who is taller and thinner than Perollo."

“ I grant you that Roccaforte is the taller of the two, but let the ladies judge if that cavalier is not don Federico.”

The baroness smiled, and acquiesced with the count, evidently to the great discomposure of the Moor.

“ He seems particularly attentive to the lady,” said the count; “ the manners of Perollo are, I doubt not, peculiarly fascinating to his female friends, and more so, perhaps, from his generally selecting some one, whose years or whose personal charms have not so many attractions for others.”

“ A singular taste for a youth like Perollo,” observed the baroness.

“ His vanity is doubtless gratified by the pleasure with which his attentions are received.”

“ This is really insufferable, signor!” exclaimed the Moor.

Jaci looked at him with affected surprise.—“ I did not know, signor Pescaro, you were so tender of the tastes and dispositions of your friends; I am the last person in the world who would wish to

be censorious, or to hurt the feelings of any of the admirers of Perollo, who is, upon the whole, a very good youth; but you must allow that he has two or three faults."

"Doubtless, signor; but surely he is not guilty of the absurdities you mention."

"Mere trifles," continued the count; "I can tell you several other instances of his taste, which I am sure will amuse you vastly; and you may hint them to don Federico hereafter, with a due regard to his feelings, of which I would have you as tender as I should be; and be particularly careful not to allude to them at any improper time."

"Permit me to attend you to the du-chessa," said the Moor; "she is looking round as if in search of you."

"I believe it would be charity to accept your offer," said the baroness, with a smile, "and the count Jaci may accompany us; it would be unfortunate should your friend Perollo lose his instructive hints."

"I told your excellenza how satirical

the count could be ; you must not attend to his reflections on Perollo, or any other unfortunate wight who may fall beneath his lash."

" Having disarmed the violence of my blows, signor Giovanni," said the count, " I may now proceed to narrate two or three anecdotes of your friend, without hurting your sensibility." The old gentleman then detailed an instance of the heroism and gallantry of don Federico, who had during the preceding winter exposed his life to the utmost peril in rescuing some shipwrecked mariners, whose vessel was driven on the rocks under Pelegrino. The violence of the storm was such, that no one dared venture to their aid, till the spirit and humanity of Perollo excited some of the boatmen of the city to venture with him, and they succeeded in saving the unfortunate men from the imminent danger to which they were exposed. For this generous act Perollo had received the public thanks and commendations of

the viceroy, and all Palermo had resounded with his praises.

The ladies frequently interrupted the detail, with exclamations of satisfaction and admiration; but the Moor preserved the strictest silence, and seemed equally distressed as when listening to the raillery which had been previously levelled at Perollo.

“Why, signor Giovanni,” said the count, when he had concluded, “you seem to take but little interest in the exploits of your friend; I expected you would have been loud in his praises; what a dreadful thing is jealousy and envy! it is the bane of every virtue; beware, signor, of indulging in so horrible a vice.” With a low bow to the ladies, Jaci departed; but the vivacity of the Moor for some time was repressed, till the dancing again summoned him and his fair partner to join in its amusements, when he was once again all joy and animation. At the close of the dance, when he led the lady Costanza to

mother, the duchessa, who was stand-

ing by, inquired if she had yet discovered her African friend?

"At first," she replied, "I thought I could not be mistaken, but the count Jaci has now disclosed the secret."

"Jaci," said the duchessa, "was more likely to mislead than to direct you; shall I introduce you?"

"Spare me, for pity's sake!" said the mask, in his natural voice, thrown off his guard by the proposal of her highness.

"Oh! signor Perollo! it is—it must be signor Perollo!" cried Costanza.

The baroness smiled.—"For myself," she said, "I was not deceived by the Count's feigned mistake."

Perollo, at first, was rather confused at the discovery, but it soon wore away; and during the remainder of the evening he continued the life and spirit of the circle.

On the fifth day the feast concluded, with a splendid illumination in the cathedral, the effect of which was peculiarly striking. Every ornament of the external architecture was traced out in lines of

light, from its base to its highest pinnac and thousands of lamps suspended from the roof, gave the most brilliant effect to the interior of the venerable pile, while the dark pillars of the porphyry tomb under which are deposited the remains of the ancient monarchs of Sicily, still frowned in gloomy majesty, forming a striking contrast to the gay scene exhibited by the assembled multitude, in whom were displayed all that was splendid and *gallan* in the court and city of Palermo. Loudly the sacred music resounded through every aisle, and the enthusiastic devotion of the people keeping pace with the gorgeous pomp of Catholic ceremonials, was raised to a pitch, in which the coldest sceptic, or the gloomiest disciple of Calvin, could scarcely have failed to participate, however they might have argued or resisted its temptations, when the effect had ceased to act upon their senses.

The baroness Solanto and her daughter had no counteracting feeling, no sentiments which did not fully coincide with the re-

ligion of those around them ; they partook in sincerity and truth of the devotion of the time, and declared that the feast of Santa Rosalia was one of the most splendid and imposing ceremonies they had ever witnessed.

For some time the guests of the viceroy awaited patiently the arrival of the baron ; but weeks, and even months, wore away, and he was still delayed at Madrid, though almost in daily expectation of being enabled to join his family at Palermo.

During this time, the kindness of the viceroy and the duchessa were unwearied ; their friendship and regard seemed to have gained strength from their increased knowledge of their guests, whilst the admiration of Perollo had grown up unperceived into a passion, of which he himself scarcely knew the force. The viceroy, who thought he perceived some danger of it in the early part of their acquaintance, had cautioned Federico against indulging any hopes upon the subject, by observing, that there were reasons, which would make such a con-

nexion impossible, and that the profession of a soldier, for which he was intended, ought to prevent, for a considerable time at least, any idea of the sort from entering his imagination. The baroness Solanto also evidently discouraged any particular attention shewn to her daughter; and the delicacy of the lady Costanza checked every thing which had the slightest appearance of more than politeness and respect. A circumstance, which conduced very much to the intimacy with the Solanto family, to which Federico was admitted, was the discovery of an early friendship, which had subsisted between his mother and the baroness, both being daughters of Castilian nobles, and educated in the same convent at Madrid.

Donna Victoria Moncada had however quitted Spain immediately after her marriage with don Giacomo Perollo, and from that time resided entirely in Sicily. Her husband, the baron Pandolfini, was the head of the illustrious house of Perollo, from their high descent, their vast

possessions, and, above all, from the highly-popular character of don Giacomo, were inferior to none of the nobles of Sicily in influence and power. An early attachment, which began in the court of Charles the Fifth, caused the viceroy to regard the baron Pandolfini almost with the affection of a brother; and immediately after his arrival in Palermo, to take possession of his government, he had entreated that the heir of Pandolfini might be committed to his charge, which being complied with, the young Federico was placed among the number of his pages, until an opportunity offered of introducing him into the military profession—and such had now occurred.

The ensuing spring, it was expected, would be distinguished by the most strenuous efforts of the emperor, to drive the French from their few remaining possessions in the Milanese, which most probably would be followed by an irruption into France. During the autumn, the viceroy of Sicily had been making the most ac-

tive exertions to collect all the strength of the island in aid of the Imperial cause levies of men had been made with great promptness and expedition, the Imperial taxes called in, and their feudal services required from the tenants of the crown.

In the approaching spring, the forces were to march to Messina, to be in readiness for embarkation; and many others of the young nobility had, like Perollo, eagerly enrolled themselves in a cause which had been marked by such brilliant success. Amongst them was also Gaetano Pignatelli, the most intimate friend of Perollo and a nephew of the viceroy, who had for some time been stationed with the new levies at Trapani, but received permission from his uncle to spend the winter with Perollo and his family at Sciace, the place of their residence for many centuries.

The baroness Solanto and her daughter still remained with the viceroy, at the time of Federico's departure, the baron having been employed by his sovereign on an embassy to France, and the hospitality of the

viceroy not permitting the baroness to remove, as she proposed, to a separate residence; but the business on which Solanto had been occupied, being now completed, he was daily expected in Palermo; what place would then be the residence of his family, was however unknown to all but the viceroy and the duchessa, their private affairs having never been mentioned even in the presence of Perollo; but when they separated, and the baroness charged him with her remembrances to his mother, she intimated that the arrangements of the baron might probably bring her to Sciacca.

With a feeling of indefinable regret, Perollo bade adieu to the two ladies, scarcely daring to inquire into the cause. He had received every discouragement to any hopes he might have been inclined to form; nor had he yet even allowed himself to think that he regarded the lady Costanza with any other idea than that of admiration and profound respect.

When taking leave of his noble patron on the eve of his departure, Federico re-

ceived from him private dispatches  
father. His highness repeated his  
ances of esteem and affection, cl  
him to use every means in his po  
induce the baron to accompany l  
Messina in the spring; and exhorti  
rollo to avoid involving himself in  
the feuds with which Sciacca was d  
ed, dismissed him with kind wishes  
journey, and flattering desires for  
turn, which he promised not to requ  
the departure of the troops should  
it unavoidable.

## CHAPTER II.

And now, fair dames, methinks I see  
You listen to my minstrelsy ;  
Your waving locks ye backward throw,  
And sidelong bend your necks of snow :  
Ye ween to hear a melting tale  
Of two true lovers in a dale ;  
Alas ! fair dames, your hopes are vain !

WALTER SCOTT.

THE morning dawned through mist and clouds, as Federico rode from the Porta Reale ; but the wind rose gently, and soon dispersed the gloom which threatened to hang over the first part of his journey. With no small regret the young traveller had quitted the inmates of the palace ; but on the other hand, joyfully he anticipated the meeting with his family, and the society of his friend Gaetano. Slowly he wound up the craggy road to Monreale, and when arrived at the summit of

hill, turned to take a parting view of the Conca d'Oro.

The sun just rising from the bay of Ilermo, lighted the towers and spires of the city with a blaze of splendour, finely contrasted with the brilliant verdure of the orange-groves and plains behind it. Refreshed by the showers which had recently fallen, nature appeared to be recovering from the effects of the summer heats, as the approach of a Sicilian winter was, as usual, marked with the characteristics of a northern spring. The amphitheatre mountains, which bounded the scene from Termini to Pelegrino, were tinted with the richest hues of morning, save where some of the loftiest peaks began to dispel their wintry covering of hail and snow. The white sails of the fishing-boats were gradually spreading over the bay, whose waves sparkled with a dazzling lustre on the opposite side the valley, the little town of Parco, romantically seated on the brow of a hill, added to the variety of the scenery; and immediately beside the

delighted spectator arose the venerable and majestic cathedral of Monreale, one of the finest works of Norman magnificence which any country can boast.

The enthusiastic feelings of Perollo were forcibly excited by the surpassing beauty of the view before him, and he felt assured, as he gazed upon its charms, that no country on earth could vie with his native land; the objects around him, combined with the refreshing breezes of the morning, gave to his spirits an elasticity, of which youth alone is susceptible: to his fervid imagination all things seemed possible. As his eye sought the distant towers of the palace, over which the Imperial banner was gaily waving, his thoughts rested on the lady Costanza di Solanto; the cautions of the viceroy were almost forgotten; it is true, he had never yet seriously reflected upon the subject, or considered the nature of those sentiments which she had excited in his breast; but it was with unfeigned delight that his mind dwelt on the hope which the baron-

ess had held out, of their meeting in Saccà, and of the renewal of that interview which he began to think of consequent to his happiness. The ensuing campaign he trusted, would afford him an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and of acquiring those honours for which he impatiently panted, and which, when added to hereditary claims, might render him worthy of his name and of his country. He would perhaps have indulged himself some time longer in these reflections, had not his servant Baptista and the mulet who attended, grown impatient to proceed.

“ We have a long journey to Alcàsser,” said the servant, “ and if we lie on the road, must expect to be late in the woods, which our guide tells me are terribly infested by banditti, who commit numberless murders.”

“ Indeed, Baptista !” replied his master, “ methinks it is strange that no complaint of these outrages has reached the viceroy; however, quiet your alarms, and by a

tle expedition we may soon recover the few moments I have wasted here."

Again the party set forward, and a short time brought them to the uncultivated plains beyond Monreale, when leaving the road to Corleone on the left, they entered the narrow valley which leads to the flat expanse of country called the Sal di Partinico; the pass is for some way contracted into a deep ravine, between two vast and rugged rocks, enormous masses of which hang beetling over the pathway, and threaten by their fall to crush the passing traveller.

"Santissima Vergine!" exclaimed the guide, as they entered the gorge of this tremendous spot, and crossed himself with extreme devotion.

"Did you see any one?" cried Baptista, in a tone of terror.

"Any one!" said the man; "there were at least four or five of the most ferocious-looking ruffians I ever beheld; but one of them I shall never forget."

The countenance of the domestic exhi-

bited signs of extreme alarm, and he plored the man to explain himself.

“ It is now some months ago——”

“ Some months ago!” interrupted Baptista; “ I thought you had a glimps them this instant.”

“ No, signor Baptista, it is now sc months since, in this very place, I was ness to an affair, which I have no do ended in a most bloody murder.”

Baptista urged his steed as near as p sible to that of his companion, and, bre less from impatience and anxiety, entr ed him to narrate the circumstances.

“ Why, as to that,” said the man, “ sc of the same party may, for aught I kn be still lurking about in the clefts of th rocks, where doubtless,” (he added in under tone) “ we might find the rema of the miserable victim they had seiz whose cries for mercy are still ringing my ears, and I almost expect to see gigantic leader of the band start on us fr some angle of the road.”

Baptista glanced a fearful and hasty vi

around; but the sun was shining brightly on the scene; his companions were well armed, and no object appeared to justify his terrors—"Perhaps we had better wait," he said, "till we are through the pass; yet no one could overhear, if you spoke in a low voice, and, of course, we cannot be in danger."

"That is as it may be," said the muleteer. "The poor fellow they seized was just such another in appearance as yourself, with nothing about him which could excite an idea of valuable plunder; and the persons who took him certainly did not resemble common banditti."

The prudence of Baptista held a conflict with his curiosity, and he was silent for a few moments.

"What were the circumstances to which you allude?" asked Federico.

"Why, if your excellenza wishes to be informed, I must tell you, that a few months back—"

"We had better wait, if your excellenza

pleases, till we are through the ravine," interrupted Baptista.

Federico smiled at the caution of the valet, and bade the man proceed in his narration.

Travelling the same road, he said, some time since, he was approaching Partinico towards the close of the day, and had just reached the entrance to the defile, when a shrill whistle echoed amidst the rocks, and three or four men rushed upon him; in an instant he was dismounted, and they were proceeding to secure him, when two other persons joined the party, and from the tone of authority they assumed, were evidently the leaders of the band. The gigantic figure and dark habiliments of the principal of the two, seemed to have made a deep impression on the mind of the narrator. In a voice of impatient anger, he commanded the men to quit their captive, and pointed to another traveller, who had at the moment entered the pass; before the terrified and astonished muleteer could effect his escape, he saw the

unfortunate victim, for whom he supposed himself to be mistaken, seized by the ruffians, torn from his horse, bound, and, in spite of his vehement cries and supplications, borne from his sight, by the road through which he had entered the defile.

Taking advantage of the confusion, the muleteer succeeded in gaining the plains, where he concealed himself in the thickets, and soon saw the tall cavalier returning at a furious rate, apparently in search of him, upon which his alarm was so great, that he remained in the covert, until the shades of night enabled him to reach Partinico unperceived.

Federico inquired if any one had been missing from the neighbourhood, or any traces seen of the body of the murdered victim?

The man answered in the negative, but confessed that his terror and alarm, lest he should incur the danger of discovery by the chieftain, or any of his band, had prevented him from making any particu-

far inquiries. The slight view he had caught of the features of the former, had impressed him with boundless fear, and he described him with all the exaggeration of his horror-stricken fancy. The dark plumes waving over his cap, gave additional fierceness to the lurid glances of his eye, and the cloak in which he was enveloped threw an imposing air of mystery around his lofty figure; the portrait was sketched in such vivid colours as to cause the height of alarm in Baptista, and excite considerable mirth in Perollo, who added not a little to the fears of his domestic, by loudly expressing a desire to obtain an interview with this supernatural-looking being.

Without any incident, the party reached Partinico, (the supposed site of the ancient Palamita, which was built by Aeneas and his Trojan followers). After resting here a few hours, they again began their journey, and crossed the fertile plain, through long avenues of olive trees, till they arrived at Valguenara, a small town

upon a hill, surrounded by marshy grounds, which during the summer months cause such an infectious atmosphere, that the few inhabitants appear afflicted with all the varieties of disease and deformity incident to Malaria. In a small chapel adjoining an old palace belonging to the Gravina family, a solitary priest was saying mass to a congregation consisting of two old women, and the attendants of Federico seemed inclined to halt, and offer up their vows for a safe deliverance from the woods of Alcamo, which however they passed without any incident, and arrived at the place of their destination just as the vesper bell was sounding from the Capuchin convent without the city.

Alcamo having no attraction to detain him, and being anxious to reach Trapani, Perollo started early the next morning, with an intention of visiting the ruins of Segesta on his way. Although it might have been an extraordinary circumstance for a native of the island to be interested in its beauties and its wonders, yet the

care of the viceroy had given to his *protégée*, in the Jesuit father Pasquale, an instructor, whose classical learning and elegant erudition had excited in him that taste which was just beginning to awaken in the most refined courts of Europe ; and Federico Perollo, with the natural quickness and enthusiasm of his countrymen, had availed himself of the advantages he had thus received ; he contemplated with delight the beauties of his native land, and, with eagerness and pride, had listened to the classic tales of her historic fame and splendour : it was then impossible that he should pass by one of her finest relics unremembered and unseen ; and impatient as he was to join Gaetano, the temple at Segesta had irresistible attractions for Perollo.

From Alcamo he proceeded through a wild and dreary waste, unmarked by any appearance of life or civilization ; not even a wild olive-tree to cheer the scene of solitary desolation, and nothing more amusing than his own reflections, and the lamentation of Baptista, at the loss of time this

excursion from the main road must occasion, with a sad recapitulation of the miseries of travelling, and a doleful remembrance of the ease and pleasure to be found in Palermo. After a journey of two hours and a half, having crossed, with some difficulty, a stream of water much swollen by the autumnal rains, on winding round an angle in the road, the object of their visit appeared before them.

Placed on the summit of a hill in silent lonely grandeur, stands the temple of Segesta, perfect in all its parts; the plain and unadorned magnificence of its structure forcibly arrested the traveller's attention, whilst its symmetry, its simple beauty, and the imposing site on which it stood, filled him with admiration and delight; with impatience he hurried up the steep side of the hill, to contemplate the interior of the building; here, however, he was somewhat disappointed, the coarseness of the stone, and total absence of ornament, though grand and impressive in the whole, rather diminished the satisfaction which Federico had

expected from a more minute inspection of this fine remnant of other ages.

From the temple itself he at length turned to the surrounding objects. On one side it commanded a view down the valley by which he had approached; on the other, the scene expanded over a vast extent of country; on the north it looked down a steep and rocky defile, the stones of which were tinted with all the varied hues of the mosses and lichens which covered them; and on the south lay the ruined walls and fragments, which once formed the strength and splendour of the city of Segesta. Federico had no cicerone with him to give a name to every loose heap of stones, which accident or design had thrown together—he had no one to point out the situation of palaces and temples, which perhaps had never existed; but his imagination, in wandering amidst the low walls and fallen fragments of this once populous and now-abandoned city, could, with a sensation of melancholy satisfaction, back the former ages of Sicilian great-

ness; and connecting the past, the present, and the future, he had wandered on, absorbed in thought, ignorant of and unheeding the lapse of time, till he was suddenly roused from his reverie by the sound of some one rapidly approaching; at the same time Baptista and the muleteer riding up, he concluded it was from them the sounds proceeded; but on turning round a projection of the ruins, he saw two persons not belonging to his suite. Though surprised at such an unexpected rencontre, Perollo might have supposed them travellers like himself, brought there from curiosity, but for the exclamations of Baptista, and evident alarm of the muleteer.

“Who are these strangers,” demanded Perollo, “whose appearance has excited such wonder and dismay?”

“Oh, signor, the guide declares that it is the same dreadful cavalier he saw in the pass of Partinico; had I known this last night, I should not have felt so secure under the same roof with him.”

“Did you not make out in Alcamo the name of the gentleman? Surely, Baptista, you might have satisfied your curiosity, if he took up his quarters at the convent.”

“For two hours, signor, I last night endeavoured, in vain, to make it out, which I am sure I should have been more cautious in doing, had I entertained an idea that it was the same person of whom we yesterday heard so fearful a history.”

Federico inquired of the muleteer, if the person they had just seen was the same who had committed the outrage he had described in the defile near Partinico?

“From the imperfect view I had of the cavalier,” he replied, “and terror I was in, I may have been mistaken; but two such men, and both so alike in dress as well as in size, surely cannot be found in Sicily; I recognised him at the first glance, and urged Baptista to make all possible speed to inform you of our danger.”

“Taking it for granted that it is the same,” replied Perollo, “I see no reason to suppose that any attack was meditated

upon us, or that we could have cause to fear the prowess of an inferior number of assailants, though this gigantic knight had found a companion of similar dimensions to himself, and one attendant was the whole of his train. You have seen no one besides lurking amongst the ruins?"

" Santissima Maria forbid!" ejaculated the man, looking fearfully around.

" We shall all be inevitably murdered!" cried Baptista; " he is gone for the rest of his troop, and will return before we can possibly effect our escape. Oh that we had received absolution before we left Palermo, or that I had never quitted it!"

" Let us hope your confessions will not come too late, Baptista," said his master, " if you delay them till we arrive in Trapani; and in the meantime let me hear what you saw of this gentleman at Alcamo. At present you need be under no alarm, for had he meditated an open attack, he would not have come thus singly, and been obliged to retire for further aid." A little assured, though still under the

influence of considerable terror, the servant proceeded to state, that soon after they had reached the convent on the preceding evening, the cavalier had arrived attended by a single domestic. Of the former, however, Baptista had seen but little, for one glimpse at his dark and ill-favoured countenance, he said, was all he could obtain, and that it looked as little like a sick man as the expedition to Segesta—“Tired as I was,” continued the valet, “I found up his attendant; but all I could make out from him was, that his master was in ill health, had left Palermo some hours later than he intended, and was much fatigued by the exertions he had made to reach Alcamo that evening. This, I assure you, signor, is all I could discover; though I communicated to the uncivil fellow all our intended movements, and confided to him all our plans, telling him that your excellenza——”

“Truly, Baptista, your communications to a stranger were highly discreet and laudable; it matters not indeed who knows

our route; but in future it may be as well not to proclaim to all the world who and what we are."

"Your excellenza thinks then," replied Baptista, with some emotion, "that they have some evil designs on foot—perhaps are part of don Sigismund di Luna's banditti."

"Count Luna can feel no personal enmity towards me, I should think," said Perollo, "nor can I perceive any possible connexion to exist between him and the perpetrators of the deed to which the muleteer was witness; for myself, I have been fortunately removed from Sciacca too early to be involved in the feuds of the families there, and sincerely hope that time will, ere long, altogether extinguish them."

"Impossible, signor, that the families of Luna and Perollo should forget their old grievances, and be friends; and unless the count and all his family should have shut themselves up in Bivonia, we shall not be long in Sciacca without feeling the effect of their hatred and malice: and who

does your excellenza suppose these persons to be, unless they belong to don Sigismund?"

"Granting the cavalier to be the same gentleman of whom you yesterday heard the alarming history, I should suppose him to be some resident in this neighbourhood, entirely unconnected with the inhabitants of Sciacca, where the chieftains of Luna, I believe, have always resided; nor is even their castle at Bivonia often used by them as a place of abode."

"No, signor; formerly I have heard it was a stronghold belonging to the Peralta family, and the Castel di Luna being incapable of resisting any military assault, the counts of Luna have kept their mountain fortress as a place of resort, in case at any time their outrages should provoke their neighbours to punish them as they deserve, and they have continually been adding to its fortifications."

"By the recent death of the countess Lucretia, his wife, which was, I understand, sudden and unexpected," observed Perollo,

“the count must be occupied in other cares than those of enmity to our house, or hostility against his neighbours.”

“Your excellenza will excuse me, but the case is quite the reverse. Don Sigismund is, I understand, again on the eve of matrimony.”

“Matrimony!” exclaimed Perollo; “why his wife has not been dead above eighteen months.”

“No matter, signor; that she is dead, so much the better for don Sigismund, and so much the worse for the lady with whom he is now in treaty.”

“How so, Baptista?”

“Why, signor, it is a well-known fact, that the last marriage of the count was an engagement entered into by the old contessa his mother, for the probable advantage of the family, without consulting the inclinations of the parties concerned; and the spirit of the late lady Lucretia resembling that of don Sigismund, all his quarrelsome dispositions found employment at home, without disturbing the old family

feuds: the present treaty may be some time before it is brought to a conclusion, and the lady may be of a more gentle spirit than her predecessor; in either case count Luna will find his time hang heavy on his hands, unless he can renew his contests with your excellenza's family and friends."

" So then, in consequence of his wife's death, we are to arm ourselves for warlike measures, it being essential to the happiness of don Sigismund to have discord either at home or abroad."

" Certainly, signor; but by this new treaty of marriage, he appears to be inclined to renew the internal commotions of his castle."

" He must then have sufficient employment upon his hands, and being interested in shewing a few symptoms of love and gentleness, we shall not find him so turbulent and hostile as you seem to expect."

" Well, signor, nothing, I perceive, can put you on your guard against the stratagems of your enemies."

" Not being aware of having any, your cautions, Baptista, are thrown away."

" Does your excellenza then think nothing of the extraordinary conduct of these strangers?"

" Upon my word," said Perollo, laughing, " I can see nothing mysterious or alarming in our meeting at Segesta, nor in the valet's declining to answer your impertinent questions; much less can I predict any danger of attack from a sick cavalier, attended by a single domestic. You must have given your last night's acquaintance a terrible idea of your valour."

" But can your excellenza suppose that these heaps of rubbish and ruined walls can have attractions sufficient to bring a gentleman, who was really indisposed, so far out of his way? He had much better have quickened his pace to the madonna di Trapani, and prayed for his recovery, than have exposed himself to the fatigue of a ride over these hills for nothing, as he did not even ascend to the old building with which your excellenza seemed so en-

raptured ; we saw him ride up the valley but a few minutes before we joined you with the horses."

During this conversation they had mounted, and proceeded on their way to Trapani, crossing the flat and marshy lands which extend round the base of Mount St. Giuliano, where, in days of yore, stood the temple of the Erycinian Venus. Ceasing to attend to the harangues of his servant, the thoughts of Federico had wandered far away from the scenes around him. The event which had excited such wonder and dismay in his attendants, was soon forgotten in the variety of other reflections with which his mind was occupied. From the anticipation of his meeting with Gaetano, his imagination had travelled on to the delight of seeing again his family in Sciacca ; in Sciacca too he hoped once more to enjoy the society of the Baroness Solanto and the lady Costanza.

In the spring, he should have the pleasure of bidding adieu to those who were dearest to him on earth, to enter on the per-

military life ; but if, as he fondly hoped, exertions should be crowned with the ~~se~~ and approbation of his commander, proudly should he once again revisit native land, and receive the gratulations of his friends ! perhaps the smiles welcome of the lady Costanza di Sora might brighten his return. With any distinct idea why or wherefore, the subject of his meditations seemed to terminate in the same object, to revolve around the same centre, the lovely heiress of Planto.

In the bustle and gaiety of Palermo, in the daily habit of meeting, Federico had perhaps thought of his Spanish days less than he did now, when left to himself alone for subjects of reflection ; yet any one accused him of being in love with the lady Costanza, he might, and probably with truth, have denied the accusation ; or had their future destinies brought no more within the sphere of each other's knowledge, the impressions he had received would perhaps have passed away.

with other phantasies incidental to the fervour and romance of youth.

Arrived in Trapani, Perollo found his friend Gaetano in anxious expectation of him, and not less delighted than himself at meeting once again; mutual details fully occupied them for the remainder of the day; but the first joyous effusions of their happiness had scarcely passed away, when Federico thought he observed a slight cloud hanging over the usually buoyant spirits of his companion, and anxiously inquired the cause.

“A misfortune,” he replied, “which has befallen a friend of mine, has of late occupied much of my time and thoughts; to-morrow I will introduce you to don Vincentio, and inform you of the particulars of his melancholy loss, in which I know you will feel, as I do, the deepest concern; but let us not recur to these distresses to-night.”

A stay of two or three days in Trapani was all Federico intended to make, after which, Gaetano was to accompany him to

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for the seat of war.

On the ensuing morning Pignatelli kept his promise with his friend, and narrated to him the circumstances to which he had alluded.—Don Vincentio Landolini, he said, a cavalier with whom he had formed an acquaintance at Trapani, was a younger brother of a noble family, who having displeased his connexions early in life, had been neglected by them, and left entirely to his own slender means, a trifling appointment in the garrison being the only military promotion he had ever obtained. In a small cassino near the sea-shore, at some distance from the town, he had resided (when duty allowed him to be absent) with an only daughter, in whom all his hopes and happiness were concentrated; their residence was peculiarly lonely and retired, both the circumstances and

the inclinations of don Vincentio leading him to fix at a distance from the society and consequent expences, of a large and populous town like Trapani. One day he left his home, as he thought, for a few hours only, but was detained until the next morning, when, on his return, he found his cassino a blackened and still-smoking ruin, his Marguerita gone, and no one human being remaining to tell the tale. When Pignatelli first reached Trapani, this melancholy event was the theme of universal regret; many of those, however, who were deepest in their expressions of commiseration for the unfortunate fate of don Vincentio, thought they had done sufficient in proclaiming their excessive sympathy for his misery; but it was not thus that Gaetano felt or acted; the cavalier was a stranger to him, but his misfortunes were a call of all-powerful force, and he had exerted himself with the warmth and energy of the oldest friendship, in making every inquiry, and seeking every means of information on the subject. Son

if the fishermen belonging to the town had seen the flames, but their distance from the shore at the time, made them ignorant of the cause from whence they proceeded; these individuals, however, had not yet been found by Gaetano, and their report came only through the medium of others, the men themselves being absent on some distant voyage for the present.

Don Vincentio, though deprived of every hope in this life, still bore himself meekly, and with the resignation of a Christian, acknowledging, with the deepest gratitude, the disinterested exertions of Pignatelli in his cause.

When Gaetano called to inform don Vincentio of his approaching departure, he begged to introduce to him his friend Perollo, who had seldom seen any one exciting, even in their first appearance, so powerful an interest; his armour indeed bespoke no wealth in its wearer, but his tall and graceful figure, though wasted by grief, still preserved a dignity which commanded respect; whilst the mild and me-

lancholy expression of his finely-feature countenance conciliated affection and regard.

“ I ought not to be sorry that you are going with the companion of your youth my friend,” he said to Gaetano; “ but I shall miss you sadly—yours is the only society which has ever beguiled me for moment of my misery, and I shall almost wish I had never known the indulgence but I will not damp your pleasures by my egotism—God bless you wherever you go and if you ever are a parent, the relic your affectionate attentions have been to me, will be remembered by you with greater satisfaction than more brilliant exploits.”

Gaetano expressed his anxious hope that something might still arise to give some relief to his afflictions, and claimed a promise which don Vincentio had long given, that in case any intelligence should be obtained to excite any cheering hope he would apprise him of it, and employ his personal services and his interest with the

viceroy, in any way that might contribute to his comfort and assistance.

With modest and feeling delicacy, Perollo begged that he might be permitted to join his exertions to those of Gaetano, and to offer the services of his family and friends, if it should be found that they could in any way tend to clear up the mysterious circumstances of the cavalier's misfortune.

Landolini again expressed his thanks; and, almost overpowered by his feelings, repeated his adieu to them both.

Readily complying with the impatience of Perollo, Gaetano consented to set out rather late on the third day, instead of waiting till the next morning.—“We may,” he said, “if we reach Castel Vetrano to-night, be in Sciacca to-morrow evening; and at my uncle's castle we shall be better accommodated than among the Capuchins; there is not perhaps much chance of our being sumptuously feasted, but we shall there be at liberty to do as we please, and

it is the only place where we can halt, & as to divide our journey into two stages.

To this proposition Federico assented and, deeply engaged in conversation, they proceeded on their way, crossed the open country to the south of Trapani; and leaving the towns of Mazzara and Marsala on the right, and Salerme on the left, & they passed by Santa Ninfa, their attention was roused by a loud peal of thunder which rolled deeply among the mountains before them. The day was fast declining and the gathering clouds upon the hill threatened a tremendous storm before they could possibly reach Castel Vetrano, the six or eight miles distant; whilst the marshy grounds which surrounded them prevented their reaching Santa Ninfa by shorter route; but they were not easily dismayed, nor likely to make much evils no greater than a thunder-storm, or journey for an hour or two in the dark even had they been so inclined, the ludicrous distress of Baptista would in some

degree have counterbalanced the discomfort.

He began in a lamentable tone—"Your excellenza will now, I hope, see the use my advice would have been of, had you taken it, and not left Trapani at an hour when there was no chance of reaching our destination before it was dark; night is rapidly coming on, and a storm rising among the mountains: Our Lady grant we may reach Castel Vetrano in safety!"

"Amen!" answered Gaetano, "and that we may not be spirited away by the demon of Segesta, nor washed out to sea by the mountain torrents!"—adding, in a whining tone, as much like that of Baptista as possible—"oh, Federico! had you but listened to this miracle of wisdom, we had never come hither to be drowned in the highway, nor left in the dark to the mad knight of Alcamo and his uncivil attendant."

"Well, gentlemen," replied Baptista, somewhat piqued out of his dismal condi-

tion, "you must say what you please; but if my eyes deceived me not, I saw the same two figures behind us, as we crossed the flats, not more than an hour ago."

"Why, Baptista, the storm which is coming will be the death of your sick friend, and relieve us from all our apprehensions; it is the most fortunate thing that could have befallen us; your wisdom and foresight have been proved beyond a question, and your evil genius must necessarily perish from the inclemency of the night."

"I knew your excellenza's merriment would not spare me," said the man, "or I could at the moment have convinced you of the fact, by shewing you the identical tall figure which we saw the other day, wrapped in his black horseman's cloak, with the black plumes in his hat, which my master must have observed at Segesta."

"Better and better," retorted Gaetano; "you have at least derived some benefit from your friends."

"How so, signor?"

“Why, Baptista, you have learned to hold your tongue upon an occasion.”

As the man was about to reply, another peal rattled among the hills; the wind blew whistling over the marshes, and large drops of rain announced the approaching storm. The party stopped a few minutes to defend themselves from its violence, by girding on their cloaks, then quickened their pace whilst a little light remained; the rain increased momentarily, the thunder rolled nearer and nearer, and the mountain echoes scarcely allowed an interval between the claps: at length a flash of the most vivid lightning burst from the cloud before them; it vanished not in an instant, but seemed to roll along the earth in a body of liquid flame; at the same time a deafening peal of thunder shook the ground beneath the horse’s feet.

“Jesu e Maria!” screamed Baptista; the other servants echoed his ejaculation, and an interval of silence succeeded; during which the party heard, or thought they heard, the sound of voices before them:

## THE FEUDS OF

other flash, nearly as vivid as the last, drew forth a groan and a pious ejaculation from Baptista.

“Never mind, my fine fellow,” said Gaetano, “this will finish the black gentleman behind us.”

Again a long and loud clap of thunder seemed tearing the hills from their foundations, and in the pause which ensued, voices were distinctly heard in accents of terror and distress. Impelling their horses to the utmost speed, Federico and Gaetano rode forward, and the next flash gave them an imperfect view of the persons from whom the cries proceeded. A litter overturned upon the ground, several men and two or three females supporting the body of a lady to all appearance lifeless, and the fore-horse of the litter stretched dead in its harness, were the dismal objects which struck their sight. The succeeding thunder-clap was less violent than that which preceded it, and when it ceased, a female voice exclaimed—“Indeed, indeed, your *nz*a may perceive that my lady

lives—she breathes, she revives—the Virgin be praised, my lady lives!"

Gaetano was about to demand the nature of the accident, and to offer their services, when the lightning's flash again illumined the scene.

"The lady Costanza!" exclaimed Federico, in a voice of terror and amazement, throwing himself from his horse, and seizing her hand; "what dreadful chance has exposed you to the perils of a night like this?"

"Signor Perollo!" cried another voice, "Heaven be praised for this unhoped-for aid!" An hysterick sob from the younger lady gave proofs of returning animation.—"My child!" said the baroness; "gracious Heaven has restored my child!"

The thunder again interrupted every other sound; when it had ceased, Pignatelli learnt from the attendants (for Perollo and the baroness were capable of no thought but for Costanza), that the party had left Palermo on the day before, to join the baron Solanto, who was expected on the

western coast, and were proceeding to Castel Vetrano when overtaken by the tempest; during which the lightning had struck down the fore-horse of the litter, and terrified the ladies nearly to death.

Whilst Perollo was aiding the baroness and her daughter, who was recovering from her swoon, Gaetano, with the assistance of the men, raised the litter, and dismounting one of his own servants, placed his horse in the harness of the animal which had been killed, and urged the ladies, if possible, to proceed immediately.

In a faint voice Costanza expressed her ability to go on, and being placed by Perollo in the litter, he inquired of the baroness where to direct their way?

“ To Castel Vetrano,” she replied; “ a courier has been forwarded by the kindness of the viceroy, to prepare for our reception at the castle.”

“ We cannot be above an hour’s journey from the town,” replied Federico; “ let the lady Costanza and your excellenza keep up your spirits, and we shall soon be there

in safety; trust to my friend Pignatelli and myself to take every precaution requisite."

The violence of the tempest was now somewhat abated, but the rain still descended in torrents, and the darkness was almost impenetrable: placing the guides however in the van, and themselves riding on each side the litter, they advanced as quickly as the state of the road and other circumstances would admit.

Gladly the party hailed the lights in the towers of Castel Vetrano, where they had no sooner arrived, than Gaetano hastened forward to announce their approach, and found that every preparation had been made which time would permit, the courier having only arrived on the preceding night.

The lady Costanza, though considerably recovered, still felt the effects of her accident, and retired to the chamber prepared for her almost immediately; but the baroness remained for a short time with the young men, to express her thanks

for their services, and informed them that the baron Solanto having been so long delayed from his voyage to Sicily, had at length abandoned his plan of visiting Palermo, and embarking in a small vessel for Sciacca, had forwarded dispatches to herself and the viceroy, excusing the change in his arrangements, and requesting her to join him instantly at the place of his destination, where he hoped to be arrived when she received the information; upon which she had quitted Palermo without loss of time, and was anxiously hastening to Sciacca.

The young men earnestly entreated permission to be her escort for the remainder of the journey, and the lady having acceded to their request, the party separated for the night.

CHAPTER III.  
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*“ Beatrice.—For which of my good parts did you suffer love for me?*

*Benedict.—Suffer love! a good epithet—I do indeed suffer love, for I love you against my will.”*

HAVING exerted themselves to procure all the comforts for the ladies which circumstances would allow of, Gaetano and his friend proceeded to disencumber themselves of their drenched garments, and to make arrangements with the castellan for their own accommodation, and that of their servants, during the night.—“ For ourselves,” said Pignatelli, “ we will remain where we now are—in a small apartment near that of the ladies—my own man and Baptista may make up their bed in the anteroom, and the other servants you will dispose of as may least inconvenience your own family.”

“ And the other cavalier, signor?”

“ Don Federico remains with me.”

“ I mean the other gentleman, who came into the castle after your excellenza, in the train of the baroness.”

“ There was no one with the party but attendants.”

“ Excuse me, signor, there was a tall gentleman in a large dark mantle, with a plume of dark feathers in his cap ; I should not have observed him, but from the glittering of the chain round his neck, as the torches were held up for the ladies when they were taken from their litter.”

The friends gazed at each other.

“ We saw no such person,” said Gaetano ; “ the baroness has inquired for no one, and where is this gentleman now ?”

“ I have not seen him, signor, since we were in the court below, but I will inquire amongst the people, who can doubtless inform me.” The castellan withdrew.

“ Did you observe this strange cavalier, Federico ? or can it be your Segestan ac-

quaintance, desirous of a further interview?"

"It may either be some ~~superior~~ attendant on the ladies, or some ~~gentleman~~ belonging to the town who joined the party after we left it," observed Federico.

The man returned in a short time and stated that several of the men had seen the strange cavalier when he entered the castle, but none knew who he was, or whither he had gone.

"It must have been as I supposed then," said Federico; "some gentleman of Cosenza Vetrano joined the party after our departure, and from motives of curiosity having followed it to the castle, is now gone to his home."

"Have you seen your friend, the black magician of Alessano, signor Baptista," asked Gaetano, as the valet entered the room, "since we arrived here?"

"Many of the other attendants did," answered the man, "and I have no doubt it was the same; I hope your excellency

will have no cause to think more serious of him than you do at present."

"Really," said Gaetano, "I shall be anxious for an introduction to this wonderful personage."

"I fear then you will be disappointed for you may be satisfied it is no other than I have said," interrupted Federico; "some cavalier belonging to the place, who having seen the party to their abode, is now gone to his own."

"I know most of the neighbouring gentlemen personally," added the castellan, "but the extraordinary height of the person I saw below, and the slight view had of his dark countenance, convinces me he is a stranger here."

"Well," said Gaetano, "he does not seem to be in the castle now, or as if I intended to honour us with an interview do therefore, my good friend, see what you can procure us for supper, and let us get to rest as soon as we can, for last night I had but little repose—I hope to-night I shall make it up."

"I hope so too," said Baptista, in a tone somewhat resembling a groan of anticipative alarm.

Having inclosed their repast, the young men prepared for their repose, and dismissed their servants for the night. The castellan had provided for Baptista and his companion the means of making up a bed on the floor of the anteroom.—"We won't place it too near this frightful old arras," observed the former: "there may be rats behind it, animals which I abhor; or there may be some concealed door not well secured; nor will we have it by the window, for the rain and thunder still continue; nor by either of the doors, because—"

"Really, signor Baptista, you appear as if no part of the room would suit you: do let us place it in the centre, and make haste to bed. I believe you would gladly prefer some other apartment: do you know any thing of this room, and has there been any horrid murder committed here?"

"The Virgin forbid! how can you talk

of such things? I certainly think the fine long room where the soldiers sleep, or the one on the opposite side, where the baronessa's people are put, might have held us also."

"And who then would have attended on their excellenzas?"

The bed being arranged, the two servants were soon unconscious of all around them; Baptista having first most devoutly committed himself to the protection of the Virgin, Santa Rosalia, and St. Francis, and placed against the door, which opened into the gallery, two or three articles of furniture.

The night was stormy and tempestuous, the wind howled round the towers of the castle, the rain beat with violence against the windows, and at intervals the fury of the tempest seemed to revive; during one of the most tremendous blasts, the door of the room was so much shaken, as to throw down part of the barricado which Baptista's care had placed there; it awoke him, he started up in his bed and listened;

but the gust which ap-  
the disturbance die-  
again, save the hea-  
were heard without. Uttering a short com-  
mendation of himself to his patron saint,  
he tried to compose himself to sleep, envy-  
ing his snoring companion. A slight  
movement again rustled at the doorway;  
he started and listened, in hopes it would  
pass away like the former sounds: it ceased  
for an instant, and Baptista breathed again;  
but his respiration was almost immediately  
suspended, by seeing, most distinctly, that  
the door was moved, and a light shone in  
at the aperture; in speechless terror he  
gave his companion a violent push, but  
the fellow snored on unheeding.

The door was gradually forced back;  
the light became more visible, and a tall  
dark figure entered the apartment; his  
head was bare, a cadaverous paleness was  
spread over his strongly-marked features;  
in one hand he held a lamp, and though  
wrapping his long cloak around him, he  
seemed to carry some weapon beneath it

in the other. He advanced rapidly, ~~and~~ with a firm, but quiet tread, nearly half way towards the opposite door of the apartment; having hastily glanced ~~his~~ fierce dark eyes over the chamber, Baptista ~~had~~ recognised the figure he had seen in the ~~the~~ corridor of the convent of Alcamo, in the ~~the~~ ruins of Segesta, and on the road from Trapani; his terror was so great, he could utter no sound; his mouth was distended to the utmost limits, and his eyes involuntarily fixed upon the object before him; he grasped his sleeping companion with convulsive horror, who, roaring at the violence of the gripe, woke and sprang from the bed, dragging Baptista along with him, still clinging to his arm, who seemed, by the howl of his fellow-servant, to have recovered his articulation, and joined in his sonorous lamentations. The figure stopped, stared for an instant at the terrified domestics, and extinguishing the light, rapidly escaped into the gallery.

Gaetano and Federico, awakened by this.

ries of their servants, rushed from his apartment, armed only with their swords; but finding the anteroom in darkness, Perollo returned for the lamp, when he discovered Baptista upon the floor, his companion, who had disengaged himself from his grasp, standing beside him in a state of wonder and amazement. "What is the cause of this disturbance, Signor?" asked Gaetano, hastily.

"Why, signor, I believe Baptista has some frightful dream, for he awoke by pinching my arm most horribly; the noise I made seems to have alarmed the gentleman who was coming to my chamber."

"Who could be coming to us at this hour? surely the ladies are not ill?"

Baptista tried to speak, but could only do so inarticulately, and shake his head. Ricco was hastening out to make inquiries into the cause of the confusion, when Baptista, by a violent effort, threw himself in his way, and arrested his progress.

"Stop! stop! for Heaven's sake, signor!"  
Federico paused for an instant—"he may be lurking still in the gallery."

"Oh, oh!" said Gaetano, "your old friend, Baptista, has been disappointed in his visit to us by your uncivil alarms."

Baptista assented in silence, unable to speak intelligibly of the mysterious object of his fears.

"Come then, Federico, let us lose no time in seeking him; this fellow is as little communicative as signor Diavolo himself."

The two young men then, in spite of the supplications of the servant, left the room, ordering Giuseppe to remain with his associate, who insisted on crawling to the door, that he might have the consolation of seeing the light from the lamp as long as possible.

"This way," said Federico; "let us not alarm the ladies, neither is it probable the stranger would enter their apartment, as his errand seems to have been to me."

The doors of the gallery were all closed, except one which opened into the armoury

the castle, and all was silent but the storm without.

“There are so many places of concealment here,” said Gaetano, “and we are so unacquainted with the castle, that it is a hopeless task to search for this said cavalier, who, after all, may be only one of the other servants, or perhaps a creature of Baptista’s fancy—no one appears to be in motion, which must be the case if the ladies required assistance; and by alarming the household, we can do no good, and may create a general panic.”

“Circumstances,” replied Federico, “are rather in favour of Baptista’s vision; but otherwise I can see no end the stranger can propose in following me from place to place; if such is the case, we shall doubtless hear farther from him; but I do not see any probability of our discovering him now, if he chooses to remain concealed; let us then return to our room, make out what particulars we can from the servants, and to-morrow may I tell you and us some due to you.”

They then left the armoury, and returned to their chamber, where they endeavoured to gain from the men some particulars of the reason for their outcries.

Giuseppe had but little to say; he knew that he was awakened by the violent grasping of his bedfellow, to which his arm bore witness; and that when he leaped from the bed, he certainly perceived a light in the room, but who the person was that bore it, how it was extinguished, which way the bearer had departed, or how he entered, he knew not.

Baptista, in spite of the raillery of Gaetano, remained steady in his assertion that it was the sick cavalier he had seen Alcamo, and having now had a more distinct view of his features, he had some imperfect remembrance of having seen the man at a remoter period, but where or when he could not say; from this statement I never varied; but the exaggerated account he gave of his height, and the ferocity of his countenance, failed not to produce from Gaetano repeated bursts of laughter.

"Did this same *truculent*-looking gentleman," he inquired, "leave no sulphureous odours behind him? Had he not a certain air about him, as if his usual abode was in the heart of Etna?"

"No, signor, it is not that I think the gentleman I saw was a spirit from the dead, for then I should have known what to do; but I am convinced it is one of the bravoes of Luna!"

"As I am by no means assured it was not a spectre or goblin," answered Gaetano, "may I inquire what it will be necessary for me to observe, in case I should be honoured by a vision?"

"In the first place, signor——"

"Really," interrupted Federico, "if you have no more important inquiries to make, it will be, I think, as well to dismiss the men and return to bed again."

Baptista's visage fell to a ludicrous pitch of horror.—"For the love of St. Vito, signor, do not send me from you!"

"Do pray let them remain in the room," said Gaetano, "for the presence of signor

Baptista seems to have something peculiarly attractive to this mysterious traveller; and I shall flatter myself with the hopes of an interview if he remains here."

They then retired for the rest of the night to their couches; and the servants having brought in their cloaks, rolled themselves in them, and slept on the floor till morning.

The castellan waited on the gentlemen as soon as he understood they were visible, and begged to know, from Gaetano, how he intended to proceed.

"The day," observed Pignatelli, "is too bad to allow us to think of leaving the castle, and the ladies must want rest and refreshment after their alarm last night; we shall therefore probably remain till they are able to proceed: and now tell me if you have seen or heard again of the stranger who appeared last night in the castle?"

"No, signor; but the servants were surprised this morning at finding two horses less in the stables than there were

last night; however, as these buildings are without the walls of the castle, the strangers might have put their horses there, and gone themselves to the convent for the night."

Federico and his friend looked at each other, and the castellan having retired, the former observed—"This is a singular coincidence with the statement of Baptista, and it appears undoubted that some one has traced my route from Palermo hither, but with what intention I know not. I am not aware of having private enemies, and Baptista's suggestion that the stranger is an emissary of don Sigismund di Luna appears absurd, as I left Sciacca too young to have provoked his anger, and my destruction could forward no views either of himself or his partisans."

"To me," replied Gaetano, "it seems equally ridiculous that any one should take the trouble to follow you during the whole journey, terrify your servant into fits, and depart without attempting any thing more."

After breakfast, the day seeming a little improved, the young men agreed to stroll into the town, as well to see it as to hear if any strangers had been observed in the neighbourhood, before or since the preceding evening.

The town of Castel Vetrano is situated upon a hill, in the centre of one of the loveliest scenes of fertility which even Sicily can boast; immediately around it is an extensive plain covered with vineyards and corn-fields, interspersed with a prodigious number of almond and olive trees, and groves of oranges and lemons; whilst the country-seats of the nobility, embowered in luxuriant groups of mulberry-trees, some of which grow to an enormous height and dimensions, give to the scene an appearance of life and cheerfulness. On the mountains which encircle the plain to the north, are the towns of Salermi, Santa Ninfa, Margarita, Partanna, and Monfrici, being all built of the white stone of the country; their towers and steeples formed a lively contrast with the vivid green of

the hills, now restored to their proper hue by the rains of the season. On the south, the expanse of ocean rolled before them, still turbulent from the recent storms. On the west, the eye wandered over the flat and fertile plain towards Trapani; and on the east, their view was bounded by the majestic mountains which rose in a bold outline behind the town of Sciacca.

Federico, naturally enthusiastic in his admiration of the beauties of his country, looked on the enchanting landscape without any apparent pleasure or interest. Gaetano watched his countenance, but forbore, for a while, any observation, allowing him to lose himself in the subject of his thoughts, whatever it might be; at length he said—" Well, Perollo, having sufficiently studied the view before you, now for your eulogium on its beauties."

" It is indeed very beautiful."

" Very beautiful! Why, man, it is an earthly paradise. I'll give up the Milanese, and cultivate my uncle's territorial do-

mains; I'll turn my thoughts to corn, wine, and cowkeeping; I'll throw myself at the feet of the first beauty I meet, and in twelve months be solely occupied by my charming wife, and delightful little family; occasionally we will make you a visit at Sciacca, but for some time it will be impossible for me to tear myself from all these domestic comforts."

During this tirade Federico was looking towards the castle.

"What!" said Gaetano, "you are examining my future abode; it certainly wants considerable repairs and decorations."

"Did you not see some figure at that window?" asked Federico.

Gaetano looked as if he thought him rather wild.—"What, Baptista's friend—signor infernale?

"No," replied Perollo; "a female figure: is not that the apartment of the baroness?"

"Really it may be, for ought I know; and you may have been honoured by a vision of their fat old attendant, for no

other of the party can be large enough to be distinguished at this distance."

" Surely it was donna Costanza."

" Impossible; but do you intend to be haunted by her image, as your idiot Baptista is by the old boy in his long black robe and plumes? to be sure, our adventure last night was sufficiently romantic; we have nothing to do now but to fall in love and complete it. I do not wish to cut your throat, my dear friend; so, as you have probably settled your choice some time since, I will take up with madame la baronessa, and leave the fair Costanza to your sighs and sonnets."

" Ridiculous, Gaetano! she is certainly an exquisite creature, but——"

" But what? this exquisite creature has captivated you, and a pretty life I shall have of it; but I abhor love tales, and if you make me your confidant, depend on it I will proclaim it to every creature I meet with."

During this conversation they had reach-

ed the small Dominican convent near the east end of the town, and were interrupted by the approach of one of the monks, who coming up, said—"That having been informed of the arrival of the viceroy's nephew and a party at the castle, without preparation for so many being made, he was commissioned by the prior to offer any aid and accommodation their poor hotuse could give."

Gaetano thanked the monk for these offered services, but said—"As their stay was likely to be so short, they should have no occasion to trouble them;" adding, "I suppose by to-morrow the Fiumara will be passable."

"Provided no more rain falls, signor, it certainly will; and indeed one of our brothers heard, from a man who lives on the hill by the Fiumara side, that the barone della Bardia had crossed it at an early hour this morning, attended by a single servant; they must have left this place in the dead of the night, and what can have occasioned such a journey we can none of us imagine."

"Is this barone an inhabitant of Castel Vetrano?" asked Federico.

"No, signor; he resides near Sciacca."

"I thought I had some recollection of his name——"

"Don Accursi d'Amato, signor."

"Yes, I now remember it well."

The monk was beginning a conversation which seemed likely to be rather long; therefore Pignatelli commended himself to the prior with grateful thanks, and the friends took their leave.

In their way back Federico said—  
"Does it not strike you, Pignatelli, that this barone has some connexion with our strange visitor? it may, or it may not be so, but I have a strong suspicion, from what the monk said, that it is no other than Accursi d'Amato who has thus followed me from Palermo, though why or wherefore, I know not."

"Who and what is he?"

"One of the nobles of Sciacca, most firmly attached to the house of Luna. I have myself no recollection of him in any

way, but of his connexion with that family I have frequently heard, from persons who know more of the politics of Sciacca than I do; what more than curiosity could have induced him to follow me thus, I cannot possibly conceive."

"Something more must have excited his visit last night," said Gaetano; "and something, I fear, not quite so innocent: however, it would be ridiculous to connect every strange event, or unexpected occurrence, with this dreadful feud, as Baptista does;—and having been so long removed from the scene of contention, you surely cannot have incurred the enmity of the faction, nor contracted any taint of the spirit which, it is to be feared, animates too many of the parties."

"No, Heaven forbid!" replied Perollo: "I feel towards every individual of the house of Luna nothing stronger than indifference, and have long resolved to use every means in my power to allay the unhappy discords which have so long torn asunder the bonds of society and neigh-

bourhood in Sciacca; but so violent is the rage of party there at present, that no hopes of any friendly intercourse can be indulged in."

On reaching the castle, the cavaliers repaired to the apartments of the baroness, and found both her and the lady Costanza quite recovered from all effects of their fright. The ladies had both felt some curiosity to see more of Pignatelli, of whom they had heard so much at Palermo, from his noble relatives, and still more from Perollo, who had never spoken of him without his vehement regard and affection being manifested.

As frequently happens, he was the very opposite to his friend both in manners and person—Perollo being very tall, singularly handsome, and more than commonly commanding in his appearance, for one so young, and his manners sure to attach those who knew him, but apt to be unattractive to strangers, from their mistaking a natural reserve for hauteur; he did not

shew every new impression, but when received, it was nearly ineffaceable; and his character had in it a deep and ardent sensibility, which felt much, but had the power of concealing it, except from those who knew him very intimately.

Gaetano resembled him in nothing but high honour, steady principles, and the then unusual taste for literature, which they had both received from the same tutor. In person he just escaped being little, but was exquisitely formed; rode and danced better than any body; was acknowledged to have the finest eyes, and most animated countenance, in all Sicily; was the idol of every society, and the favourite of every lady. The little party now assembled at Castel Vetrano could with difficulty be equalled for graces of mind and person.

After the baroness had thanked the friends for their timely aid in her distress, the foregoing evening, she said—“ We have smiled, this morning, to think how astonished you must have been, signor Perollo, at our rencontre last night; but

you had not left Palermo more than two days, when I received the baron's directions to proceed to Sciacca, and as soon as the arrangements for our journey could be made, we started; your having gone round by Trapani was the fortunate cause of our so providentially meeting with you in our distress."

Costanza was surveying, from one of the windows, the beautiful scenery around; and when the baroness had finished speaking, Perollo walked towards her, and Gae-tano observing the subject of her contemplation, said—" My friend Perollo, signora, is a devoted admirer of the beauties of Sicily, but this scene seems to have benumbed his faculties; one poor compliment to Castel Vetrano is all I have been able to extort; do pray try and rouse him to something like a sense of its beauties; for myself, I am so enchanted with them, that I have almost resolved to spend my days here, in a state of patriarchal simplicity."

" Perhaps, signor, you can discover

some grotto or hermitage amongst the adjacent hills, where your venerable purpose may be easily fulfilled, and the contemplative disposition of your friend indulged to its fullest extent," answered Costanza.

"The raptures of Pignatelli," observed Federico, "so far surpassed all bounds of moderation, that nothing remained for me but tacit approbation; he talked of a paradise on earth; had already, in imagination, beaten his sword into a pruning-hook, turned vine-dresser and agriculturist, and surrounded himself with a band of descendants, even to the third and fourth generations; a flight beyond this, I could not soar to; and as my humble applause would have fallen so far beneath his eulogium, I contented myself with merely assenting to his opinions."

"The vehement feelings of don Gaetano are, I fear, somewhat transient," said Costanza, "and the attractions of the metropolis would perhaps draw him from his rural paradise to the purgatory of Palermo,

where he would soon forget his sheep and his lambkins."

"And inconstancy, no doubt, would be a crime sufficient in your eyes, fair lady, to doom me to remain in my abode of punishment?"

"No," replied Costanza, "I would send you back to your vineyard and sheepfold, lest the gaieties of the court should charm away all your regrets, and you should be contented with your lot."

"Lady, you are a merciless judge, and I would appeal from your sentence to the angel who, by the original contract, was to have been my partner in the rural life, which you and Perollo hold in such disdain; however, there are few among the dames of Sicily who would not encourage my apostacy, I fear; and that reflection alone seems sufficient to make me delay my intended purpose of turning husbandman in Castel Vetrano."

"For shame, Pignatelli!" exclaimed Federico; "how can you thus doubt the

retired and domestic virtues of our country-women? My mother has, for these twenty years, abandoned all the splendour of the Imperial court, and, with occasional visits to Palermo, has resided in the intermediate time at Sciacca; and except during the long absences of my father, I believe she has never regretted the exchange."

"The baroness Pandolfini is universally held up," said Gaetano, "as a model of female dignity, virtue, and excellence; there cannot, therefore, be many such in the world, nor do I expect my future destiny to give me such a treasure. I intend, therefore, to be contented with perfect beauty, gaiety, good-humour, wealth, rank, and such like external and internal ornaments."

"Moderate and reasonable in all things, signor!" said Costanza, with a smile; "and you will give in return——"

"Myself," replied Gaetano, "such as I am—my good qualities, which Perollo must be well aware of, and can give me a

character for ; these we must make the most of, and the others we will not mention, but decently conceal from view."

" You must be a good hand at masquering, don Gaetano," said the baroness, " if you can contrive to keep this vanity out of sight. I do not wonder, signor Perollo, that you speak with exultation of your mother's domestic virtues ; such qualities are not matters of surprise in females who, from want of birth, talents, beauty, or any thing which we are apt to think essential, are not fitted for courts ; but it must require no small degree of philosophy and cheerfulness of temper, in a being so singularly adapted to grace them as Victoria Moncada, to be happy in so confined a sphere as Sciacca."

Federico's heightened complexion and sparkling eyes spoke his delight at this unsought and unexpected tribute to the excellencies of a mother, on whom he doated, and whose approbation was the most delightful reward he had ever received for any exertion.

The baroness Pandolfina had intrusted to servants the care of his education even in his earliest years; justly felt that he would, almost unconsciously, imbibe opinions and ideas those around him, which would affect his future character, and which no arguments could entirely efface: a delicate sense of honour, high-minded generosity, a just and impartiality in judging ourselves, liberality of sentiment, and a nice sense of what is becoming in others, it is absurd to expect should be inculcated by persons who are continually seeking excuses for wanting the qualities themselves; and there can be no doubt but such sentiments, received from the lips of an elegant female and a affectionate mother, are imprinted more deeply and with more pleasing association on the heart of a boy, than they would be if they proceeded from an austere old maid or a vulgar nurse.

But to return to our party. The baroness Solanto expressed so much regret to Perollo, at the thought of meeting

her old friend, that he ventured to say—  
“How I wish your excellenza’s destination  
then was to Perollo Castle. have you a  
residence prepared in Sicacca?”

“Why, I do not quite know if the  
baron has been long enough there. he may  
have got a separate abode for us. but I mu-  
tter expect we shall be guests for a time  
at Luna Castle.”

“Luna Castle?” ejaculated Perollo, as  
every expression of pleasure vanished from  
his countenance: “I beg pardon for re-  
peating your excellenza’s words, but I was  
so utterly disappointed by your intelli-  
gence: I had hoped for my mother and  
myself so much satisfaction; but with the  
unfortunate prejudice of count Luna  
against our race, it will be much if you  
are not induced to dislike the very name  
of Perollo.”

Costanza advanced to her mother as  
Perollo spoke; the whole party were silent  
for a few moments, and all seemed rather  
distressed; at length Costanza said, timid-

ly—"Is don Sigismund so very prone to hate?"

"Only those, lady, who are allied or attached to any of our family."

"It is a feeling I cannot understand," she said, and then added—"I mean, I cannot imagine hating for a name."

Federico looked so grateful, that she returned again to the window, but did not seem to attend either to the landscape or Gaetano, as she had done before; however, the baroness, almost immediately, said—  
"Do not let us anticipate any thing so painful, my young friend; to dislike every Perollo, we must become very ungrateful, which, I flatter myself, is impossible; and with whoever I may be a guest, I must be the friend of the baroness Pandolfina. I had heard of this unhappy feud from our friends at Palermo; and I cannot but hope, that in a short time two such admirable persons as baron Pandolfina and count Luna must know and acknowledge each other's merits, when there is any friend

near, who is disinterestedly anxious to terminate these terrible discords—and such a friend the baron Solanto will be proud to be. The count's father was our very particular friend, and I am deeply interested in finding in his son all I admired in him."

The baroness seemed to observe an absent and uneasy manner in her daughter, and soon changed the conversation.

The cavaliers spent almost all the remainder of the day with them, and retired in the evening to regulate the morrow's journey.

CHAPTER IV.  
-----

'Twas autumn—and sunshine arose on the way,  
To the home of my fathers, that welcom'd me back.

CAMPBELL

THE fineness of the evening tempted the cavaliers to stroll round the ramparts of the castle by the light of the moon, which had risen in full splendour from behind the hills; chequered by light and shade, the plain beneath the walls seemed to have acquired additional beauties from the stillness of the hour, and the mild radiance of the orb of night, whose beams were alternately reflected from the white walls of the various cassinos, or absorbed by the dark foliage of the surrounding groves.

The mountains of Sciacca bounded the prospect to the east, and formed a dark bold outline against the deep blue sky; whilst to the westward the ocean waves

glittered brightly in the moonbeams. The still tumultuous roar of the gale still continued, but the storm murmured hoarsely in the distance, but not sufficiently loud to break the repose of the scene, which was now disturbed by the sound of some nervous voices whose notes came now and then to the ear.

The friends were silently contemplating the landscape, when from a window above, a voice, whose illiterer sweetness thrilled through every power of attention, drew them to the spot where they remained long after the melody had ceased, wishing and expecting to hear the enchanting strains renewed.—“It must be the lady Costanza,” said Federico, in a tone of rapturous delight.

“You appear recovering your powers of admiration, my friend,” replied Gaetano; “it will be impossible for you long to resist all the powerful attractions of the lady, and I wonder you had not cast yourself at her feet long before you left the walls of Palermo.”

“It appears then impossible, in your

opinion, Gaetano, to admire a beautiful girl, and to do justice to her talents, without being romantically in love with her."

" By no means : I doubt not but your admiration is entirely the effect of an abstract taste for female beauty, and a passion for music ; that it is nothing more than Platonic friendship, and totally unconnected with any thing more tender than esteem, respect, and veneration, such as one feels for the good old father Pasquale, for instance, or the venerable head of his convent."

" I certainly," replied Federico, " do feel the greatest regard and esteem for the lady Costanza, and"—after a short pause, he added—" for the baroness Solanto."

" Of course ; and this regard and esteem will hereafter be a very fortunate event in other respects : the ladies appear inclined to conciliate between your family and that of count Luna ; your infinite regard and esteem will doubtless make you yield with all due deference to their wishes, and the count will be equally tractable, as he

will, of necessity, be suspended in love with his fair guest, the signorina Costanza."

Peroli started, and looked with terror and amazement at Gaetano, who, bursting into a fit of laughter, inquired if he had not expressed a wish imminent to suppose the discord between the two families: — "Certainly," he answered, "but don Sigismund is engaged; he has already a treaty of marriage on foot, to supply the place of the late countess."

"Indeed," said Gaetano, gravely, and after a moment's reflection: "and what engagements has the lady? it would be as well to avoid falling in love with a person who may be already betrothed to another."

"Impossible! the lady Costanza herself assured me, she had never been introduced into society till her arrival in Palermo."

"This appears to me no proof that her heart and hand are not predisposed of, and at all events, my dear Federico, I wish you were not quite so far gone as I, dear you already are: but the night is cold, and chilly—we had better retire."

“Retire!” said Perollo. “I could pass the night in waiting for those sounds again!”

“Depend on it, you will hear no more of them to-night; and it may be supposed that we are waiting under the ladies window, to listen to their commendations of ourselves.”

Slowly and unwillingly Federico withdrew; when meeting Baptista on the way to their apartment, Gaetano inquired if he had received any further intelligence of his nocturnal visitor?

“No, signor,” he said; “but you must be convinced that some one did really leave the castle last night, by two horses less being found in the stable this morning.”

“This some one then, I presume, devoured the other steed for his supper, as he could scarcely want to ride off upon both, although he must have been terribly alarmed by your magnanimous display of valour, Baptista.”

“As to that, signor,” answered the man,

without alluding to the latter misfortune. "the cavalier had certainly an acquaintance with him."

"How much better a future than it would have made?" said Gaveston. "With his train-bearer bemoaning him, instead of walking about, with an unbroken smile, in his hand, and rolled up in the long cloak, which has made so tremendous an impression on your fancy. But at the castle artillery is too ponderous to be conveniently placed by your bedside, you may make up your couch for the night in yonder corner, and Giuseppe may retire with the other servants; but if you have any visions to break my rest, I shall take the liberty of hoisting your haunted person from the window to the battlements below, as the best way of laying the spectre and yourself also."

It being but eight leagues to Sciacca, and a season of the year when the midday sun was not likely to be inconvenient, the travellers left Castel Vetrano at no very

early hour, couriers having been sent forward to Memfici, where they intended to halt at noon, and also to Sciacca, to prepare for their arrival. The cavaliers riding on each side the litter in which the ladies travelled, much to the annoyance of Perollo, were prevented from any conversation with them, by the unceasing noise of the bells attached to the harness of the horses; and although the curtains of the vehicle nearly obscured all view of those within it, yet were the beauties of the country lost upon him, and he rode on unheeding every thing but his companion, though the forest scenery at a few miles distance from Castel Vetrano could not have failed to delight any one at leisure to contemplate its magnificence.

From these woodlands the party descended a hill, and riding some short distance along the side of a fiumara, forded it in safety, without any incident to call forth the gallantry of the gentlemen, or excite the fears of the ladies, though the mountain-torrent brawled along its rugged

channel with no small impetuosity and violence. Beyond the fiumara, the road became more hilly, and a short time brought them to Memfici (the site of the ancient Inaco), where preparation had been made for their accommodation, during the short time they halted to take their siesta, and refresh their horses. From hence they set out for Sciacca, through a country less abounding in picturesque beauties than that which they had passed in the early part of the day.

On the mountains to the left, they saw the town of Sambuca, and before them rose the lofty hill which shelters Sciacca on the north. As they approached his native home, the thoughts of Federico wandered even from Costanza, and rested with fond affection on his family and friends: his father he had occasionally seen in Palermo, since his absence from his paternal castle; but his mother he had not seen for some few years, and on meeting with her, his fancy now dwelt with rapture and de-

light; the junior branches of his family were all so much inferior to him in age, that he remembered them merely as infants, too young to engross much attention from a boy.

But amongst the friends of his early days, his kinsman, don Paolo Perollo, stood high in his remembrance and affection; anxiously did he hope to hear that Solanto was arrived, and that no bar was placed to an immediate introduction taking place between the two families; the old friendship would be renewed between the ladies; his father and the baron, he thought, had probably met in early life, Solanto having long held high military commands under his Imperial master, and don Giacomo being well acquainted with most of the leading men in Charles's court: with the baron Pandolfini he knew it was impossible not to be captivated; his highly-polished manners, the joyous cheerfulness, and the boundless liberality of his nature, were irresistible attractions, which drew the hearts of all men towards him; and Fede-

Seated on a rocky eminence, whose base is washed by the waves of the Mediterranean, seaward the place commands a boundless view over the ocean; a stupendous mountain forms a barrier to the north, proudly overhanging the walls and towers of the city, but at such a distance as to afford no advantage to a besieging enemy. Within the walls, the towers and turrets of the principal castles of Luna and Perallo seemed to frown defiance to an invading foe; whilst the spires and steeples of the numerous convents and churches, with the more modern palaces of the other

nobles, blended with the intervening foliage of groves and gardens, gave to the whole an air of gay and cheerful greatness, elegance, and wealth. Federico, with silent exultation, looked at Gaetano, and pointed to the scene; Costanza, who had at the instant put back the curtains of the litter, smiled to see his transports, and he thought he had till then been blind to half her beauties.

At the bottom of the hill, the party crossed a small fiumara, or mountain stream, and ascended the opposite steep, Perollo thought, with most provoking tardiness; and when at length they entered the gateway of the city, his heart beat quickly with joyful anticipation; and in passing through the streets to the Castel di Luna, every well-remembered object returned with vivid force upon his mind, and with redoubled claims on his admiration; in the exuberance of his feelings, he could have greeted as an old friend don Sigismund himself; and never did his bosom so overflow with love and kindness to every hu-

man being, as when now riding down the principal streets of Sciacca, after an absence, which, though of no great duration, was in his life a most eventful period.

In a short time the travellers arrived before the ancient abode of the illustrious house of Luna and Peralta, the old and inveterate foes of Federico and his race, the friends and allies of Costanza di Solanto and her family. Over the principal entrance, which was cheerless and gloomy, heavily waved the banner of the counts of Luna, and a few centinels upon the battlements above were the only signs of life about the building. The porter was some time before he obeyed the summons, and gave the future inmates of the castle sufficient opportunity to contemplate the dark and unprepossessing exterior of the mansion.

To the inquiry, if the baron Solanto was arrived, a negative was given, which banished the hue from Costanza's cheeks, and seemed to overpower the baroness with distress and alarm.—“ Is count Luna

in the castle?" she asked, in a tremulous voice.

Some person of more importance now came out, and requested to know if the baroness Solanto was the inquirer; stating, when he had received the reply, that count Luna had received the courier from her excellenza, and anxiously expected their arrival, but that important business had called him for some hours from Sciacca; on his return he hoped to find both the baron and his family inmates of the castle, and that during his absence the countess, his mother, would be honoured by shewing them every hospitality it could afford.

The baroness remained silent an instant—"But for the late tremendous storm, I should not feel so alarmed," she said, "at the absence of my lord."

Gaetano was near, and feeling for her distress, answered cheerfully—"The wind is so fair, that a few hours will probably bring the baron's vessel into port; though the late gales, from which no danger I think need be apprehended, may have made

it prudent to keep it a distance from the coast during their ~~entertainment~~?"

" My mother I am ~~sick~~—" began Federico.

" No," interrupted the baroness, " I will not trespass on her kindness; I do not see that I could, even if I were so inclined. We will have the honour," she said, addressing the messenger of the countess, " to avail ourselves of the hospitality of count Luna, and pay our respects to his lady mother."

Federico shewed in his countenance the disappointment which he felt.

" For a time, my kind young friends," said the baroness, " accept my grateful adieu; the earliest opportunity I shall most anxiously seek to see your mother, signor Perollo, and beg that, in the meanwhile, you will present to her my kind remembrances: the baron Solanto, whose arrival I hope will not be long delayed, will, I am sure, be uneasy till he has expressed his thanks for those attentions, of which I shall long feel the value."

The cavaliers then kissed her hand, and Federico, as if to defer their separation for an instant, requested, that if any arrangement could be made to facilitate the landing of the baron, she would oblige him with her wishes and commands; his father being admiral of the adjacent seas, and commander of the port galleys, might, he said, be able to render him some attention, and would feel most happy in being called on to do so.

Again the baroness repeated her thanks, but said, that she did not apprehend there could be any occasion to call upon the baron Pandolfini for an exertion of his influence; if such however was the case, she promised they would cheerfully accept his offer. The lady Costanza looked grateful for this additional attention; and once more bidding them adieu, the litter was borne within the castle gates. The friends having seen it within the walls, Federico gave his horse the spur, and they set off with velocity for the neighbouring towers of his paternal residence.

As the litter passed under the city portal of the Castle di Luna, the heart of Costanza felt sad and oppressed: her mother's pallid countenance shewed that her recent disappointment weighed heavily upon her spirits, and made her languid and unwell: the surrounding objects were but little calculated to give either cheerfulness or comfort to the travellers: and when she looked round the courts of the castle, an involuntary sigh escaped from her, who considered herself as doomed to be its future mistress, for such was the present destiny of Costanza di Solanto.

By the first impression she had received from the appearance of the city of Sciacea, she had formed other ideas and a higher opinion of the abode of count Luna: it was true, it had all the grandeur of Gothic magnificence, but it was peculiarly dark and dreary; the palaces in the town, which she had observed in passing through to the castle, had most of them been erected by wealthy nobles, whose patents of nobility could vie in antiquity neither with the

honours of Luna nor Perollo; these buildings were all in the modern and lighter style of architecture, which began to arise with the re-establishment of its sister arts after the slumber of ages. Don Sigismund however had neither the taste nor the inclination to enliven the abode of his forefathers by modern innovations; even the dress of the domestics, though handsome, was obsolete; and their appearance, either from the tone of mind which circumstances had given to the newly-arrived guests, or from their having imbibed the disposition and habits of their superiors, was sombre and repulsive.

The dark hall into which they first entered was hung with the arms and banners of the illustrious ancestors of the counts di Luna, which appeared objects of peculiar care to the present lord; for the spears and swords gleamed brightly from the walls, the casques and cuirasses were untarnished by rust, and shewed that no neglect had put them by as useless appendages of state, or as relics of former days.

the ladies were conducted from the up the grand staircase to an apart-  
, where in solemn state sat the mo-  
of count Luna, who was to do the  
ars of the castle to the guests. Maria  
sma, countess of Caltabellotta, was  
t sixty years of age, at the time of her  
at introduction to the baroness So-  
, and her daughter, by birth a mem-  
f a younger branch of the house of  
ese, and nearly connected with the  
y of the reigning pontiff, Clement the  
nth. Sciacca, the place of her birth,  
for many years the only part of the  
d of which she had any idea, and the  
minent rank of the house of Luna, in  
native city, made her marriage with  
count Giovanni the consummation of  
most ambitious hopes. Arrived at this  
ht, she considered it as one of the du-  
of her elevated station to look down  
 infinite contempt on all the nobility  
neighbourhood, who were not con-  
ed with Luna and Peralta, and as her  
obligation to her husband and his fa-

mily, to enter with vehemence into their hereditary detestation of the Perollo race; at the same time making the aggrandizement of her son, don Sigismund, a paramount object, to which every feeling was to give way, every minor interest to be sacrificed; and on this principle she had promoted his second marriage with the wealthy heiress of Solanto, whose Spanish blood would have been an insurmountable objection, but for the power and the riches which such a connexion would give to the house of Luna.

The countess was a bigot in her religion, intolerant towards every opinion which did not originate with herself, or was not first submitted to the approbation of her own narrow understanding. The character of Maria di Luna might have been held up as a model of every harsh and unamiable quality, had not devotion to her son, and the interests of his family, nearly resembled the excess of maternal love; but pride was the basis—pride the stimulant of all her actions. Don Sigismund, never-

theless, felt the value of that self-devotion in his mother, which would have sacrificed even her existence to his glory and advantage.

Once, and once only, she had appeared in Palermo at the viceregal court, where her repulsive and unamiable habit had disgusted every individual who witnessed them, whilst her unpolished manners, bigoted opinions, and insufferable pride, had been subjects of mirth and ridicule throughout the court; and most of her good natured friends having vented, as far as they dared, to inform her of several pieces of absurdity of which she was the object, she insisted upon immediately returning to Sciacca, breathing vengeance against the court, the viceroy, and even against the government, for the insults she had received; nor had she ever after endured the thoughts of Palermo, or any succeeding representative of the royal authority, detesting as sincerely the duca de Monteleone as his predecessor, who had filled the viceregal chair thirty years be-

fore; added to this, her hatred of every thing Spanish had been raised to its highest fury, by the capture and imprisonment of Pope Clement, with the tacit approbation, if not by the desire of the emperor: the indignities the pontiff had received, she felt with all the keenness of family connexion, and all the bigotry of a devoted Catholic; and so inflamed had her spirit become upon this subject, so violent was her irritation, that could her influence or her exhortations have roused her countrymen to a repetition of the Sicilian vespers, probably, with the sole exception of count Luna's destined bride, not a living soul, who drew even from a distant source their origin from Spain, would have breathed another day upon the island.

Hence too arose her hatred to the baroness Pandolfini, and the ardour with which she followed up the engagement of her son with the countess Lucretia, niece to her relation Clement the Seventh. Such was the character of the countess, a compound of pride, hatred, and unfeeling in-

ace, unuttered in extasy. & her feelings over those words, for one person was equally welcome to me against, still and unheeding the day she attempted to assume an air of ill humour, but when the effort was failed, her manner descended to weariness.

It was in vain that she attempted to hide her harsh stern features in smiles at home to the baron and Countess. former, fatigued by the journey, and prostrated at the absence of the baron, too weak and low to take an attentive eye of her hostess; but the latter, though greatly distressed at her mother's sufferings, gazed with mixed feelings of ridicule and disgust at the awkward figure and animated dress of her future mother-in-law. closely-fitted robe of black, with a broad lace of gold, embroidered from the bosom to the feet, shewed off her gaunt and gaunt length of body, whilst most enormous hanging sleeves added to her ungainly motions and appearance; the hard

features of her face were unsoftened by a single hair, all was tightly combed back beneath a high-pointed cap; and a cyprus veil of enormous length, depending from the back of it, hung from her shoulders in folds, which were any thing but becoming on such a form.

Advancing a few steps to meet her guests, she slightly inclined her head, and stood as if awaiting some humble acknowledgment for this prodigious honour. The baroness and Costanza returning the slight salute, listened for the welcome of their hostess—"Don Sigismund di Luna," she began, "will much regret that his absence from Sciacca for a few hours, has prevented him from paying to the baroness Solanto those honours and attentions which are due to all those with whom he feels himself connected. In his absence, I beg to offer my assurances of respect and affection to his affianced bride, and to command every hospitality this castle afford to be placed at her service and disposal."

Costanza crimsoned at the neglect thus

ed to her mother, and felt inclined to say to the pompous absurdity with something like petulance; but the baron meekly addressing herself to the lady, said, that her weak health, and the absence of the baron, had rendered her so unfit for society, that it was perhaps better for her to be spared an introduction to don Sigismund, until more fitted for conversation; that she would so far trespass on the courtesy of the countess, as to beg permission to withdraw with Costanza, and by a quiet repose to recover her strength and spirits.

The lady of the mansion turning to her attendants, directed the chamberlain to be summoned, and without noticing the illness of her mother, proceeded to inform Costanza of the cause of don Sigismund's absence.—“The son and heir of Giacomo Perollo, finished, no doubt, by his education in all the profligacy of Palermo, is expected to-day in Sciacca; and to avoid disgusting excesses which will doubtless be granted to all their licentious ban-

ditti, my son is gone over to Bivonia to-morrow."

"The absence of count Luna," repl Costanza, "can be of no material imp and requires no apologies ; had he been Sciaccia to receive my mother on her a val, his gallantry might have been so alleviation to her disappointment ; and arrival of don Federico Perollo would ha been a subject, I trust, of pleasure to h as from our providential meeting with t gentleman and his friend, the signor F natelli, my mother and myself may at bute our existence now ; and their sub quent attentions and kindness to her v not, I trust, be easily forgotten by : who are interested in our welfare."

The countess gazed at Costanza, a she could not exactly comprehend w was intended, or had not heard arigh " Destruction light on all Perollo's hou she exclaimed, with the most malign passions marked on her countenance ; a after a short pause, in which she seem contending with the most violent en

ions, added—" The dragons and enchanters, young lady, from which you have been rescued, I doubt not, were raised by the same power which overthrew them. This is a fresh insult to the house of Luna!"

The baroness raised her head in amazement; but perceiving Costanza about to reply, she said—" It was from the dangers of an accident during the late tempest, that Don Federico and his friend delivered us; great indeed is the obligation we received. We will now, by your permission, signora, withdraw to our apartment," she added, wishing to stop all further discussion on the subject. Their hostess appeared unable to articulate, and bowing her head, the ladies returned her salutation, and, preceded by the attendant, withdrew.

They were conducted through a long gallery to a large and uncomfortable suite of chambers, furnished with splendid but antique magnificence. As they passed from the room in which they had been received,

the voice of don Sigismund's mother, raised to the highest pitch of discordant fury, sounded in their ears, but rendered perfectly unintelligible by passion. When they had reached their apartment, the baroness, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, became so much indisposed, that she desired to be placed immediately on a couch; and ordering one of her attendants to repair to the Marino, and procure the earliest information of any vessel which might appear in sight, she sunk into a state of lethargic silence.

Costanza, seated by her side, and no longer called into active exertion, gave way to the mingled feelings of disgust and indignation at the conduct of her future mother-in-law; disappointment at not finding her father arrived, and the weakness and indisposition of her mother, anticipating, with some little dislike, the return of don Sigismund, and remembering, perhaps with regret, the cheerfulness and attention of their late fellow-travellers, she

silently weeping, till an attendant end to announce the time of the coun-'s evening repast.

CHAPTER V.  
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Blest be the gracious Pow'r, who gave my age  
To boast a son like thee !                            HANNAH M

WITH difficulty Gaetano kept pace w  
his friend's impatient speed through  
narrow windings of the streets by w  
they passed to the Casa di Perollo:  
drawbridge was down, the castle-g  
thrown open, and in the space before th  
a multitude of vassals and dependants w  
collected, apparently waiting the expec  
arrival of the heir of Pandolfini.

Federico halted for an instant, and le  
ing kindly and affectionately round h  
returned their salutation ; and then, am  
the noisy gratulations of the crowd, and  
thunder of the castle artillery, rode into  
inner court: he might have recogni

many a familiar face, but his impatience was so unbounded, that he knew not of whom he inquired where to find his mother and the baron. He scarcely heard or waited for an answer, but seizing the arm of Gaetano, hurried him impetuously into the great hall, where they were met by don Giacomo, who, affectionately embracing them both, said—"Welcome, even as Federico himself, is every Pignatelli here."

"Where is my mother?" asked his son.  
The baron smiled at his vehemence; and Federico, turning round, saw descending the grand staircase to the hall, the object of his inquiry, and in an instant was in the arms of the baroness herself—"A most ceremonious introduction this, don Gaetano," said the baron, with a smile; "your friend seems inclined to leave you to introduce yourself, whilst he is indulging the exuberance of his joy."

"His impatience," answered Pignatelli, "has hurried me along at such a rate since we approached the castle, that he has, I

suppose, left me, in charity, to recover myself in the hands of your excellenza."

" Well then I must be your herald," said Pandolfina, leading him towards the stairs, which the baroness was descending.

Gaetano thought he had seldom seen so attractive a figure, or one in which dignity and grace were so equally blended: her height was not above the middle standard; the symmetry of her form, rounded by maturity, seemed to him a model of matronly beauty; and the conscious rank of the high-born Castilian gave an air of majesty and courtly elegance to her carriage, which might have graced the Imperial throne of Charles himself. Her features were not perhaps strictly beautiful, but characteristic of all the milder virtues which the meeting with her son had called forth. No violent passion had shed a wrinkle on her brow; no air of insolent vulgarity disturbed the serene dignity of her countenance; and the fascinating smile with which she extended her hand to the

friend of Federico, welcomed him with all the warmth of long acquaintance.

“I know not whether Figatelli or myself,” said don Giacomo, turning to his son, “have most right to complain of the treatment we receive.”

“Forgive me, my father, for her sake who made me thus forgetful.”

“You need not plead in any other name than your own at such a time as this, I trust,” said the baroness, after having welcomed Gaetano to the castle.

“To say the truth,” said the baron, looking with manifest delight at Federico’s figure, so altered and improved since he had seen him last, “the boy must be forgiven for every thing but making me so evidently belong to the descending generation—his appearance must have added twenty years to my age already.”

“Certainly not in your looks,” replied the baroness; “nor does the accession of years seem to damp the joy which his arrival brings.”

The hall now began to fill with the retainers and vassals of Perollo, assembled to congratulate the return of their future lord.—“Andrea!” exclaimed Federico, taking the hand of a grey-headed old man, whom he had distinguished among the crowd.

“The Holy Virgin bless your excellenza for your kind remembrance!”, said the old man, stooping to kiss his knees.

As Federico stopped him, he said—“Believe me, Andrea, time has not worn out the memory of any of my old friends, much less of one like you, whose recollection must return with every thought of my boyish sports.”

“Four generations of your house have I known,” Andrea answered, “and each successive one has called up new and stronger ties of duty in my heart.” He gazed on Federico till blinded by his tears—“I had not hoped,” he said, “to live to see the son of don Giacomo all that my fondest wishes could conceive.”

Federico then led his mother to the

apartment she had quitted, when the signal of his approach had been sounded from the battlements ; the baron, engaged in inquiries of Gaetano relating to his uncle's welfare, followed them : the younger children, two daughters and a son, the eldest of whom was ten years junior to Federico, were now greeted with fond affection by their hitherto unknown, but anxiously expected brother. The baron continued for a few minutes in conversation with Pignatelli, whilst his family were indulging their first feelings of delight at meeting. The castle echoed with tumultuous sounds of joy, and the remainder of the evening was passed by the whole party in a state of happiness which knew no bounds and no alloy. All discussion of the events in Sciacca was forgotten, in the desire of the baron to be informed of the public affairs in Palermo, and the anxiety of the baroness to learn every particular of the future prospects of her son.

The circumstances of their journey were

lightly passed over, and although Federico ardently wished to talk with his mother on the subject of Costanza and her family, yet he could not begin the conversation, which Gaetano carefully avoided ; and the expected campaign in the Milanese was of too much public interest to Pandolfini, and too much private concern to the baroness, as connected with her Federico, not to be an inexhaustible topic.—“ To-morrow,” said his father, “ we shall introduce you to the friends and adherents of our house, and welcome Pignatelli, as worthily as circumstances will admit : Sciacca cannot afford many means of amusement, but we shall endeavour to avail ourselves of all that can be found, both within and without the castle walls : one of our great festivals is at hand, which will at least enliven the city for a time.”

“ I have no fears,” replied Gaetano, “ that in such society my hours will pass heavily, or that our summons to Messina will not come too soon to call us from your excellenza’s hospitality.”

At a late hour the baroness retired, and the party separated for the night.

Early on the ensuing morning, Federico sent Baptista to the Marino, to hear if any vessel had entered the port, by which the baron Solanto could have arrived during the night; but his inquiries were answered in the negative; and his master was compelled to wait, without a hope of seeing the ladies, till Luna Castle was no longer their abode.

The early part of the day was spent by the young men in the inspection of the castle; part of this venerable pile had been constructed in the earliest days of the Norman dominion in Sicily. Rogiero de Hauteville had erected the original fortress, and the pointed arches of the keep shewed the architecture of those days; by him it was granted to his daughter Gilletta, and confirmed to her and her descendants, by her brother, king Rogiero, the first sovereign of his illustrious line. From Gilletta the castle had passed to her son,

Gilberto Perollo, with all her possessions in Sciacca and its vicinity; and the royal chapel in the Carmelite convent, where the ashes of the Perollo race were deposited, and their armorial ensigns displayed, shewed their high descent from the house of Hauteville, and the victorious counts of Apuglia. The succeeding lords of the castle had added to its size and strength; but the taste and munificence of don Giacomo, the present chieftain, had done more for its elegance, grandeur, and solidity, than many preceding ages.

The state apartments had been rebuilt, in all the florid beauty of the Gothic style, which, though declining before the Roman and Greek, was preferred by the baron's taste, as more accordant with the ancient buildings. He had also added to the strength of the outer bulwarks, and seven pieces of artillery had been placed on the most commanding parts of the battlements.

The grand entrance towards the city was surmounted by a ponderous and lofty

tower, from which the banners of the family, brilliant with the various quartering of their arms, were proudly displayed. The north side of the castle was defended by its high and massive walls: and on the east it joined the city, and an ancient gateway gave the inhabitants egress and ingress to the town at all times: nor since the viceroyalty of prince Gilberto had the captain of the city-guard, or any officer of government, ever interfered with this privilege. On the south side of the fortress, which faced the sea, several of the junior branches of the family had erected their mansions, under the protection of their chieftain's walls: some of them communicated with the interior of the castle.

Federico pointed them all out to I—“ And there,” he said, as turning to the south-west corner, he appeared below; “ there dwelt my respected cousin, Paolo Perollo; members of our house, the first in gentleness, and honour.”

Don Giacomo now called

tion to a new and splendid gateway he had built, enclosing from the city all the residences of his kinsmen, which, with the church and gate of St. Pietro, formed a barrier towards the town on the west. The site of the building itself was chosen with skill and judgment, both for taste and beauty; and the florid ornaments of the new, with the judicious improvement of the old, gave to the whole an appearance of comfort, as well as grandeur, far different from the gloom of castellated mansions of the earlier ages; and the numerous domestic servants and retainers which filled the courts, added not a little to the air of cheerfulness which pervaded the whole scene.

As Federico passed along, he was on all sides greeted with the most affectionate homage and attention; and the vassals seemed more attached to their lord by personal regard than by interest or custom.

In the armoury of the castle were hung the trophies of "many a well-fought field,"—relics of Saracenic and oriental victories.

" How can you say such things?"  
" How can you say such things?"

" Your honor," said Fitzgerald, " we  
have added much to this already splendid  
collection."

" I believe, signor," said an officer who  
attended them (don Giovanni having been  
killed away), " that many of these  
machines have been invented by this man."

tary skill of don Paolo; and others are presents, which my lord's courtesy has well entitled him to, from the great liberality he shewstoall who come under his knowledge, as captain of the port; and I fear, notwithstanding don Federico's pacific disposition, we have by no means seen the end of our hostilities to the house of Luna."

"Are all reports of vessels entering here made to my father?"

"All, signor."

Perollo thought of Costanza and her father, and his impatience to converse with his mother on the subject of the baroness greatly increased.

Gaetano avoided it, and when started by Federico, changed it as soon as possible; at length, when he retired to prepare a letter for his uncle, by the courier dispatched by the baron, with answers to those he had received, Federico repaired immediately to the baroness.

"I did not," he said, "last night deliver to your excellenza the friendly remembrances with which I was charged by

your early intimate, donna Clara de Castro."

"Where did you meet with her, Federico?"

"She has been staying for some time with her friends at the viceregal palace; she left Palermo unexpectedly two days after me, and I met them again, as Gae-tano and I were approaching Castel Ven-trano, and had the happiness to be of some little service, and we made the rest of the journey together."

"Is she then in Sciacca?"

"Yes, and, I am sorry to say, at Luna Castle."

"How very unfortunate! I do not know any one I should be so pleased to see again; these broils are for ever thwarting one's wishes: what a most uncongenial companion she will find in the countess Caltabellotta, if she is as engagingly meek and gentle as she was formerly!"

"If those were her characteristics, my dear mother, I do not think you will find her changed." Federico paused; he had

not yet mentioned Costanza, to talk of whom he had most anxiously sought this conversation; his mother seemed thinking of the baroness, and he wished, yet knew not how, to introduce the mention of her daughter; nor did he know exactly what it was he had to say about her.

"It is many years," the baroness began, "since Clara de Castro and I parted at Madrid, nor had I heard of her since, except that she was married, but I knew not to whom."

"She has a daughter with her," at length said Federico.

"Indeed!" was all his mother's reply. "The baron Solanto," she continued, "I think I have heard your father mention as an officer high in the Imperial service."

"The signora Costanza is most impatient for her father's arrival," said the son.

"So am I too," answered his mother, "for then I may perhaps see my old friend —when is he coming?"

"He is hourly expected, and then probably they may have a separate residence:

I offered the baroness to my master: and  
whatever service his master would afford  
the baron at London."

"I hope they will call for me tomorrow  
it may be the means of my getting home  
Donna Clara was more ~~surprised~~ ~~surprised~~  
than almost any one I ever knew."

"Is she as mild and commanding as her mother?"

"Why no, I hardly think we are alike  
she seems more high-spirited but we are  
so beautiful and delightful I am sure you  
will admire her."

"I dare say I shall be interested in her for her mother's sake: I wish I could see donna Clara."

The conversation was now interrupted, and Federico retired disappointed, but could not tell why. His mother knew not Costanza, and therefore could not be expected to praise her; and she was too much interested in the thought of meeting with her old friend, to give him an oppor-

tunity of enlarging on the merits of her daughter.

The preparations in the castle for the fete had been most sumptuous; the battlements were lined with soldiers, the domestics in their state liveries, and the principal apartments hung with the richest tapestry. The magnificent spirit of don Giacomo pervaded every part of his establishment, whilst his good taste prevented it from looking like an ostentatious display of wealth.

The marquis Geraci, an old friend of the baron, who was staying in the vicinity of Sciacca, was among the first who graced the feast; a salvo shot from the battlements announced his arrival, and he was shortly followed by the counts Sambuca and Partanna. A numerous and brilliant party was soon assembled in the grand saloon, to whom Pandolfini introduced his son and Gaetano.

The delighted pride with which the father seemed to contemplate his Federico's manners and appearance, soon communi-

cated itself to his friends, and the heir of Pandolfina was welcomed by them, with a warmth and cordiality which shewed the interest they took in all that concerned the head of their illustrious race. To the marquis Geraci, the young Perollo and his friend were well known in the viceroy's train ; but by most of the assembly the one was scarcely remembered, and the other (an object of less importance to them) had never been known.

“ The pride and satisfaction which your father must experience at your return, don Federico,” said an elderly gentleman, of whom he had no recollection, “ is scarcely inferior to my joy at being thus enabled to assure you of my devotion and esteem.”

Perollo bowed, and was about to reply, when a voice behind him answered the person who had spoken.—“ Your esteem, signor del Nadore, is soon and easily acquired, if at this first introduction it becomes so fervent and devoted.. To my affection Federico may indeed as-

while old attachments are remembered, and to my esteem, if the promises appearance gives shall be fulfilled."

"It is don Paolo!" exclaimed his youthful kinsman, seizing his hand, and meeting with a most affectionate embrace.

The curiosity of Gaetano had been excited by the frequent mention his friend had made of the gallant cavalier before him, and he stood earnestly surveying his features, person, and appearance. He bore a slight resemblance to don Giacomo, but looked younger, as Gaetano could scarcely suppose him forty; his open and manly countenance commanded affection and respect; whilst there was a piercing intelligence in his large dark eyes, which seemed to read the inmost thoughts; his stature was tall and erect, and an air of simple dignity marked his carriage and gestures. His dress, unlike that of the rest of the party, though composed of costly materials, was entirely plain and unornamented; and as he advanced to meet him, Pignatelli thought he must have distinguished him

from the crowd, even had his attention not been thus forcibly called towards him.

“ You have been welcomed here, don Gaetano, with all the heart of Pandolfini, and in Sciacea none can offer more; but if the services of an individual should be wanting, the friend of Federico may always claim mine.”

“ Perollo and I have been too long acquainted,” answered Pignatelli, “ for me to be a stranger to the value of any offered kindness from don Paolo Perollo.”

“ The countess Sambuca, and her brother, the baron Celano, if I remember right,” said Federico, as the baroness approached with a lady and gentleman; the lady greeted the young men with many expressions of regard, and fixing her eyes on Gaetano, addressed to his friend a multitude of questions, which fortunately she did not wait to have resolved. Don Paolo immediately retired, as if to give the inundation way.

The baroness seeing some other persons enter the saloon, excused herself, and ad-

vanced to meet them. Federico in vain endeavoured to escape the volubility of the countess by attending to others. She paused for a moment, and he took the opportunity of introducing don Gaetano Pignatelli to her notice.

She smiled with infinite approbation and lamented that her endeavours to prevail on the count to take her to Palermo had been fruitless; she was overwhelmed with sorrow and vexation at never having been presented to the viceroy and his family, and was convinced that Gaetano's friendship must be the most exalted and devoted passion, to bring him from the metropolis to Sciacca.

Pignatelli assured her he had not been called on for such a sacrifice, having only been joined by Federico at Trapani.

“Trapani!” echoed the countess; “I have more than twenty dear and beloved friends there; how delightful will be the news you can communicate of them!”

Gaetano looked in supplicating horror to Federico, who was engaged with others.

his connexions; don Giacomo and the baroness were at a distance; don Paolo kept off, and he saw no means of escape.

"How is my Antonia?" continued his mentor; "you doubtless know the lovely oness of St. Hippolita and her sister nta Margarita; ages have passed since I s so blessed as to behold them."

To no purpose her unwilling auditor gan to assure her he was enable to satisfy r inquiries; she wanted no reply, and s beginning to call over other tender endships, when turning her head, she v the barone del Nadore bowing beside r; he repeated his salutations profound- and without ceasing. The lady slight- acknowledged them, and continued her secutions; but the barone was not to be easily dismissed.—"Whilst our admired itants," he said, "are thus receiving air welcome from the lips of beauty and ice, I may be considered an intruder; t my anxiety to be introduced to don etano Pignatelli must plead for pardon." The lady smiled, and introduced him.

"Do tell me, signor," she said, "of all the marriages and engagements now on foot in Trapani. I am so interested in the dear society there, that I shall consider myself eternally obliged to you; for, five years ago, the count and myself resided there three weeks, in the palazzo di St. Giuliano — who now inhabits it? where are the old proprietors? and has it been improved since we were there?"

"The palazzo has been inhabited by—"

"Indeed! What have been the amusements, what music, masques, and festivals?"

"Occupied as I have been," said Pignatelli, during a moment's cessation, "in the tedious enrolment of our new levies, I had but little opportunity of joining in the gaieties of the town."

"Your services, signor," said Del Nodore, with a low bow, "will doubtless be seen and acknowledged by his Imperial majesty, whose obligations to your family are infinite; and I can already anticipate

from yourself, that the Milanese will be a fertile field of glory."

Gaetano stared with astonishment at his new acquaintance.

"The Milanese!" said the countess; "and are you really going to the wars?—to leave Sicily? I am grieved beyond measure."

"The signor will doubtless return covered with honours, which I am assured he well deserves," rejoined the barone, with a complimentary grim.

"Oh, but to quit Palermo!" said the lady. "Milan, I have heard, is not very gay; I knew nobody in Milan. Really, signor, if you did but know the trouble I have to persuade the count, my husband, to come sometimes to Sciacca."

"Would he had been inexorable now!" thought Gaetano.

"Can any one resist the wishes of the countess Sambuca?" Del Nadore.

The lady was just going again, when don Giacomo entered, and in-

troduced the count Sambuca to his guest. This operated instantaneously as a charm, and she became perfectly silent. Gaetano, after making his compliments to the count, took advantage of his vicinity to escape to the other side of the room, where he joined don Paolo.

“ You have had, no doubt, an interesting conversation,” said the latter.

“ To the lady I hope it was so; she seems to have a most ardent desire for information on every subject, but unwilling to wait my tardy power of giving it. Who is the fair inquirer?”

“ A sister of Ferdinando Perollo, baron Celano: her marriage with Sambuca was effected by the intercession of Pandolfini, who, strange as it may appear, has gained a most sincere and active friend, by what I think by most men would be considered no very enviable gift. The count Sambuca, however, has acquired a power over the lady, which can restrain even her loquacity, whilst the powerful connexions

and splendid dower which she brought, have raised his family high amongst the nobles of the country."

"And who," asked Pignatelli, "is that most discerning personage, the barone del Nadore, who has so high an affection and esteem for Federico, and foretold my deeds of prowess in the approaching expedition?"

"One of the illustrious members of our city government, who, though a natural adherent to count Luna's party, has found the interest of Pandolfini so useful, that he has availed himself of the easy frankness of his disposition, and contrived to be considered among the number of his friends and partisans: but here," he added, "is a gentleman, to whom I beg to introduce you, one of the worthiest and best of our citizens."

The cavalier Geronimo Ferrara now advanced, whose whole appearance was characteristic of mildness, gentleness, and ease.—"I have just been observing with pleasure," he said, "the improvement in your

youthful kinsman, don Paolo; and even you, I trust, are satisfied that time and absence have not returned your favourite other than you can wish."

"I fear it will confirm don Gaetano in an opinion of the strictness which you seem to ascribe to me, signor. If I say that a few days must pass before I can decide on Federico's unaltered worth, I hope and trust his heart is still the same it ever was; but five minutes conversation can scarcely authorize me to give an opinion so decisive."

"His appearance and manners," replied Ferrara, "cannot so far belie his disposition, but that I will confidently look forward to the day, when all our feuds in Sciacca will be closed, and Luna and Perollo no longer be the rallying words for party vengeance and hereditary discord."

"If you will receive my testimony," said Gaetano, "I will vouch for Federico's amicable temper, and challenge don Paolo's scrutiny into the excellence of his disposition; and I am assured that he will

find cause to strengthen, rather than to abate, the affection my friend has always claimed from him."

Don Geronimo embraced Pignatelli kindly, and thanked him for confirming his opinion.

The party were now summoned to the castle hall, where the banquet presented all that Pandolfini's wealth could procure, or his liberal hospitality display. The sounds of martial music echoed from the court below; the retainers of the family were splendidly attired, and all the baron's taste and magnificence seemed called forth in honour of the day. The spirits of don Giacomo were raised to their highest pitch, and shed round him a circle of mirth and conviviality, of which none could resist the influence; whilst the quiet cheerfulness of the baroness seemed scarcely less amiable and attractive.

"The barone della Bardia," said Cosmo Luchese, in the course of the entertainment, "is, I see, beginning to recover from

his confinement; he passed me this morning, in his way, I presume, to Luna Castle."

"What ill-disposed physician has sent him abroad again, to plague his friends and foes by his malignant spirit?" replied another of the guests. "The city ought to make a public day of sorrow and humiliation for his unwished-for recovery."

"Perhaps," replied Ferrara, "his long illness may have softened down his unhappy temper, and he may come forth restored in mind as well as body."

"Pray let the man who cured him prescribe for all his family without loss of time," observed Luchese.

"I understood," said Gaetano, "that don Accursi d'Amato had preceded us but a few hours in our road from Castel Vetrano hither."

"It must have been a phantom, signor," said Luchese; "the baron has been confined to St. Bartolomeo for several weeks, and, as I understood, most dangerously indisposed; he saw none of his friends, I believe, for several days."

"What signor Pigatelli says may nevertheless be true," replied the count Sambuca; "for if the evil spirit ever walks abroad, I know no form he can so properly assume as that of don Accursi d'Amato."

"And did you really see the fiend?" said the countess, in an under-tone. Having seated herself near Gaetano—"How did he look?—Whence did he come?—And whither did he go?"

"Alas!" thought Gaetano, "here comes another of the lady's tender friendships. I am sorry, madame," he replied, "it was only from report I heard that the baron crossed a fiumara in our way."

"He went to Luna Castle to-day, I presume," said Luchese, "to pay his respects to the affianced bride of don Sigismund on her arrival. And by-the-bye, signor Federico, I wonder how the count will like your intimacy with, and civilities to, his future countess, and the baroness Solanto, her mother."

The colour fled from the cheeks of Fe-

derico; for one moment he looked the ashy hue of death; in the next, the deepest crimson overspread his every feature, and he sat in silent agony.

Gaetano observed him, and instantly replied—"If don Sigismund has any regard for the ladies, he must feel glad that any one came to their assistance under such circumstances."

"I doubt not," said Ferrara, "that the count will feel and appreciate the services you were so fortunate as to render them."

No one but Gaetano and the baroness seemed to have observed Federico's agitation and distress; though his spirits had entirely vanished, and he hardly seemed to know what he was about during the remainder of the repast.

"So you really saw the lady who is to be the countess Luna?" said the signora di Sambuca to Pignatelli. "I am dying to know what she is like; I must make it all out from Federico and you."

"Oh! Perollo is not a good hand at such

descriptions," he replied ; " but I believe I can give you all the information you can wish on the subject."

" Enchanting!" observed the lady.

The conversation was however interrupted by the rising of the party.

Gaetano took the opportunity to exhort his friend to rouse himself to exertion, which his habitual self-possession soon enabled him to do ; and though the principal object of attention, no one suspected him of feeling any thing not corresponding with the festivities, which were kept up till a very late hour.

The baroness was so forcibly struck by Federico's change of countenance, on hearing of lady Costanza's engagement to don Sigismund, that she was scarcely able to banish the idea from her mind during the ensuing night. It was not that she had any great belief that people died for love, or that young men of his age are usually made very long miserable by such affairs ; but she knew that persons who do not, on every occasion, receive violent impressions,

are more apt to be deeply affected by them when they do; and most of all she dreaded, that any jealousy on the part of don Sigismund should renew the ancient feud, and those scenes of war and slaughter between the two houses, which she could never think of without horror.

She considered for some time on what was the best method to pursue: first she thought of avoiding the Solanto family altogether; then, but for a moment, of consulting the baron, and sending away Federico; but feeling sure, on the whole, that with such principles, and such a share of sense, as she had every reason to believe her son possessed, that reasoning must always be better than manœuvring, she summoned an attendant, and ordered him to request don Federico to come to her. When he entered she said—"I sent for you, my child, intending to use a mother's privilege of preaching and advising; do not look grave, for I feel that I should lly have courage to give you pain."

My mother, have I been so long away,

that you have forgotten how I enjoy your lessons, and how happy I am to obey your wishes, for you never command but by mildness?"

"Oh, you have learned flattery at Palermo; but sit down, and answer me one question.—Was I deceived yesterday in thinking the name of don Sigismund's bride gave you pain?"

Federico started up, and crossed the apartment to an open window, as if to breathe more freely; then returning to his seat, and endeavouring to compose himself, he said—"You were not deceived; but you will think me a maniac to feel thus—I hate myself for my folly; but the idea of such a creature being sacrificed to count Luna is madness!—it must not!—shall not—"

"Hush! hush! for pity's sake, for my sake, Federico! Would you involve your whole family in a war, for your personal advantage? But I see you are not cool enough for reasoning. For Heaven's sake,

my beloved child, pause before you rush on such a precipice as endeavouring to supplant count Luna. Can any thing be so dishonourable, so ungenerous? His affianced bride is accidentally exposed to your society, and you endeavour to break a contract, made by a kind father and mother (such a mother, I am sure, *donna Clara* is), and doubtless sanctioned by herself; for she was coming willingly to all appearance. In so doing, you unclose all those still-painful wounds of former discords; hazard the lives of hundreds of your fellow-creatures, all the most attached friends of your family; perhaps involve in the ruin not only the object of your mad affection, but your father! Federico, how could you see me, after you had sacrificed all that is noble and excellent to such a cause? when you had——”

“ Oh! do not torture me to madness,” exclaimed Federico; “ you know full well I would not expose my father to a moment’s pain, much less—good Heaven!

I dare not think of it! oh, no! I would be the only victim?"

"Unhappy boy! did you mark your father's countenance, radiant with happiness at the sight of you?—did you mark his glistening eyes, when your praises reached him?—did you mark his speaking looks, as, with honest pride and fond anxiety, he watched your every movement yesterday, when he knew you were the object of universal scrutiny? No, you did not, or you could not have talked of separating your interest from his. Do you forget Paolo Perollo, who has loved you almost as a father from your infancy? Federico, I am not used to talk of myself or my own feelings; but if you think I could survive such misery—great Heaven! dare you talk of being the only victim?"

The baroness's even temper and calm dignity were so seldom urged to the expression of any thing like vehemence, that Federico had been unable to interrupt her, or even to move, till she was silent.

The conflict of feeling the conversation

had created, had carried her beyond herself; she had unconsciously risen from her seat; her height seemed increased; her exertion in speaking had given a brighter lustre to her eyes, and a deeper hue to her complexion; and as Federico raised his eyes to her interesting and majestic figure, he felt that he dared not disobey her injunctions, be they what they might. He approached her, and in a subdued and softened tone, said—" My dearest mother," and clasping his arms round her, felt that as yet nothing in the world was of equal consequence to him with her approbation, and no price too great to dry the tears which now flowed from her eyes, " can you forgive me, my angel mother, for distressing you thus? You shall dispose of me as you choose; I will be the creature of your will; only let me see you happy, and I think I cannot be miserable."

" Freely indeed do I forgive you, my child. You have ever been an object of such perfect satisfaction, such intense affection to your father and myself, that I

could not know how to bear such a prospect from you; but you will be all we wish and expect you to be."

"I will endeavour to constitute your happiness at least," said Federico, sighing deeply.

"My dear Federico, we have been hurried beyond our wonted habits; let us sit down and be rational. In doing what you know to be right, you must secure your own peace of mind most effectually; you are well aware how wretched would be the consequences of persevering in this unfortunate attachment; you cannot be so romantic as to suppose that twenty years hence you will feel as you do now, or that there is but this one woman in the whole world capable of making you happy, nor so weak, as to doubt that a real and earnest endeavour to subdue a sentiment, the encouragement of which would be dishonourable and ungenerous, could be unattended with success. We are accountable beings, and have the means amply bestowed on us to govern our passio

direct our actions ; therefore, to deny the power of doing either, is to be mad or wicked. I do not mean to assert that the effort will not be painful ; but it is a duty, a possible one, and depends entirely on yourself, and therefore I expect it from you. I will do all in my power to avoid exposing you to donna Costanza's too attractive society ; and after one campaign in the Milanese, you will see this affair altogether in a new light : and now, my dear boy, you must leave me, and compose yourself, and I will do the same : it would be cruel to damp your father's happiness at such a time."

CHAPTER VI.  
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I do not think a braver gentleman,  
More daring or more bold, is now alive,  
To grace this latter age with noble deed.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the summons to the baroness Solanto was announced, Costanza in vain endeavoured to persuade her to excuse herself from attending the countess's evening repast, on account of her fatigue and disappointment; but the state of mind in which they had left their hostess, induced the baroness to exert herself, and she prepared to follow the attendant, commanding her daughter, on no account, to irritate the feelings of the lady by any opposition, or recurrence to the conversation which had passed.

When they entered the apartment, Costanza, who had expected to be received

with increased frigidity, was not a little astonished at the ghastly smile of affected complacency with which the countess advanced to meet them, and still more at the embrace with which she was greeted; and to receive which, without evincing the disgust she felt, required all her self-command.

"I am rejoiced," she said, "to see the baroness so far recovered from her fatigue, and trust that a night's rest, the speedy arrival of his *excellenza* the baron, and your tender and affectionate care, my child, will perfectly restore her."

Costanza expressed her thanks and wishes on the subject, and raised her eyes to the countenance of the speaker, whose looks were instantly averted, and she remarked the livid hue which was spread over her harsh features, and the convulsive motions which they exhibited, with something like terror, but without fully comprehending their intent.

"In a day or two," continued the countess, "one of our most solemn feasts will

ie held, that of the Holy Thorn, and you will then see Sciace in all its glory."

" The beauty of the city," said the baroness, " from what I have already seen, must strike every traveller with an idea of its riches and magnificence."

" They may boast of the splendours of Palermo," answered her hostess; " but accustomed as I have always been to Sciace, I cannot say that I could perceive them; and the insolent vulgarity too of the up-start nobles there, could not but force me to a comparison between the different treatment, which persons of our illustrious rank meet with in the profligate metropolis, and in the uncorrupted manners of their native place: here," she continued, " we are surrounded by the hereditary connexions of the house of Luna and Peralta, who will, as soon as the baron Solanto arrives, manifest their respect and devotion to the destined bride of don Sigismund. The approaching festival brings all the neighbouring nobles to the city;

and from Bivonia and Caltabellotta, the chief of our vassals will arrive."

" May I ask the origin of this religious feast in Sciacca ?" said the baroness.

" When count William di Peralta," answered the lady, " founded the monastery of Santa Maria d'Istria, some two hundred years since, he endowed and enriched it, in a manner worthy of his pious and munificent disposition; and first amongst its treasures were placed three thorns, which were part of our blessed Saviour's crown, and which the count had purchased at an immense expence in his expedition to the Holy Land. Numberless are the cures these sacred relics have performed, and yearly they are borne through the city, to procure for it prosperity and the blessings of Heaven, and a long continuation to the honours and the name of its pious and noble benefactor."

The grandeur of the house of Luna was a subject on which the countess could always descant with complacency and satis-

faction: neither the baroness nor Costanza felt at all inclined to disturb her serenity, and she continued—"Don Sigismund, always anxious to support the high station his ancestors have filled in their native home, and to shew the high veneration he feels for every thing connected with our most holy faith (which in these days meets with such insults and degradations from those who ought to be its chief defenders), never fails devoutly to attend this sacred festival, and all who love and honour his name have ever accompanied him: nay, even the inveterate enemies of the race of Luna and Peralta, who might, from the remembrance of their sacrilegious insult offered to these holy relics, in shame absent themselves, yet never neglect to join in the procession."

In thus alluding to the house of Perollo, the voice of the speaker became tremulous from agitation, and she sat for some moments in silence.

"When is don Sigismund expected to return to Sciacca?" asked the baroness, not

willing to provoke a history of the family to which the countess had alluded.

“ Early to-morrow he returns; so much business which rendered his presence in Bivonia necessary, and which he hopes to have completed, before your arrival. There is an additional motive; but he will be so anxious that any thing should have taken him from the castle at this time.”

After some further conversation of little interest, the baroness pleaded fatigue, and the ladies separated for the night.

Having reached her mother's apartment, Costanza threw herself on a seat, and covering her face with her hands, seemed entirely regardless of every thing around her, and unable to pay even her usual attention to her mother.

An old servant, who had nursed Costanza, watched this very unusual conduct for some time with silent respect, while busily employed about the baroness, but at last could not refrain from approaching her darling; seeing that, notwithstanding her silence, tears were coursing each other down.

cheeks, she exclaimed—" Santa Maria ! this frightful castello will be the death of us all ; here is my sweet young lady in tears, who is always so joyous and happy ; and I am sure all the attendants look as if they had not seen a smile since their infancy."

" Hush ! hush !" said the baroness.—" Are you ill, my child ? Come hither, Costanza.—Leave us, Beatrice ; remain in the anti-room till I call for you."

The servant withdrew, and Costanza, left alone with her mother, gave free indulgence to her grief.

The baroness seeing she was thoroughly depressed, and thinking her tears would relieve her, did not for a few minutes interrupt her ; but when she saw her beginning to recover, she said—" My love, I shall begin to think you are like Beatrice, and are frightened because the rooms are not very light, or very modern in their decorations : you have lived so peaceably and evenly till now, that you have yet to learn the effect that hurry and fatigue have even

on the buoyant spirits of youth ; but compose yourself, and after a good night's rest, you will be quite restored."

" Oh never, never ! if I meet that terrible countess," said Costanza, with a fresh burst of grief ; " indeed I cannot stay with her. If don Sigismund is like her, (and how should he be otherwise ?) surely my father will not force me to fulfil this hateful engagement."

" My dearest Costanza, pray be more moderate ; your father, you are very certain, will never force you to any thing, even though he should think it for your advantage—he is too indulgent ; but I shall be displeased if you accustom yourself to such vehemence of expression. What right have you to call an engagement made for your happiness, and with your concurrence, hateful ? Nor can I imagine why a young man must of necessity be like an old woman ; besides which, to tell you the truth, I suspect the countess cannot entertain any very exalted idea of your gentleness ; for it was more

allowable in a person of her age, and very confined education, and whose society has been composed almost entirely of persons she considers beneath her, to lose her temper for a minute, than for you to reply in any thing like the same spirit."

"Perhaps I was wrong, my dear mother; but her insolent neglect of you——"

"Was probably caused by her anxiety to shew every possible attention to yourself, and her manners not being quite perfect enough to shew her immediately how to do both gracefully."

"Oh, but that burst of fury——"

"Was very disagreeable—certainly violence is always so; but a passionate temper is by no means the worst, and is very frequently, indeed generally, accompanied by an affectionate heart; and the evident desire evinced by the countess to represent her son to advantage, proves her a kind and partial mother, and therefore, my child, I hope not in your eyes quite without merit."

Costanza was going to speak, but the

baroness continued—"I know what you would say; but I was going to remind you, that you have quite left out all mention of the countess receiving us the second time, without the least remaining anger or ill humour; this at least shews as much readiness to forgive offences received, as to commit them, which, you will allow, is a very valuable quality."

"Certainly, my dear mother, if the countess really did feel no remaining anger; but I own, without being able to explain wherefore, that her expression of countenance frightened me more the second time of seeing her than the first; however, do not let me keep you up, and fatigue you more to-night. I will promise to see count Luna with as little prejudice as I can help, and I will endeavour to be all you wish me; but indeed, to exchange your mild dominion for that of the countess Caltabellotta does seem dreadful."

"Do not alarm yourself with chimeras, my Costanza, nor encourage prejudice against the countess more than her son.

Your father, I hope and pray, may be here to-morrow, and then you will feel sure, in following his judgment, that you are safe and right. Heaven bless you! call in the servants, and we will go to rest."

Having seen her mother to her couch, Costanza withdrew to her own apartment, which was adjoining, and supposing Beatrice to be following her, she neglected to close the door into the gallery; the servant, however, remained a few minutes longer with the baroness, when becoming rather impatient, Costanza was beginning to prepare for bed, and advanced towards the door to close it. Her attention was attracted by heavy footsteps in the passage; she hesitated, not wishing to be seen, and stood undetermined what to do, when she saw a tall majestic figure pass through the open space; a long black horseman's cloak enveloped his person, and a plume of dark feathers in his cap overshadowed his features. Attracted by the light through the doorway, the stranger turned his face to-

wards it for an instant, and as quickly averted it. The imperfect view she had of him caused Costanza to shudder with an indistinct feeling of alarm. It must be don Sigismund himself, was the first idea that struck her, and she felt as if her death sentence had been passed; again she thought, from even the imperfect view she had, that it was an older person than Luna had been described to her. In this state of terror and distress, she was still standing in the centre of the room, when her nurse entered, who, almost with a scream, ejaculated—" Maria degli Trombi! what have you seen, my child?"

Costanza attempted to smile.—" Is don Sigismund returned to the castle?"

" No, ma donna, but there are plenty of guards and attendants in the hall below; but, Holy Virgin defend us! they will never hear our screams."

" There is no cause to alarm them; I have seen no spirits or spectres, Beatrice," said her mistress, endeavouring to recover herself.

“ You looked so pale and terrified, signora, when I entered the room, and asked so hastily for count Luna, that I fancied you had been frightened by something.”

“ It is fatigue and disappointment about my father, added to my mother’s illness, which makes me so pale and low-spirited, I believe.”

“ I am sure I hope my lord will arrive to-morrow, and that we shall soon be settled in a cassino of our own,” said the attendant, “ for I am sure nobody can recover either health or spirits here.”

“ Yet here,” said Costanza, with a sigh, “ my future life will probably be spent.”

“ Oh yes, signora; but when you are mistress of the castle, things will soon wear another aspect; and to say the truth, I dare say we might make these great apartments cheerful, when we have our own way in every thing, as I hope your excellenza means to have.”

“ Before we make such a resolution,” said the lady, “ I think we had better ascertain the disposition of don Sigismund.”

“ Oh, my lady, as to that, every individual I have heard speak of him here, agrees that the count is liberal, generous, and brave—somewhat hasty to be sure; but violent people, you know, are easy to be managed—indeed I made every inquiry I could.”

“ Pray, Beatrice, who sleeps in the rooms beyond my mother ?”

“ The old countess, signora, occupies, I believe, the whole extent of the gallery beyond.”

“ Has any friend of don Sigismund arrived to-night in the castle ?”

“ None, my lady, I believe.”

Costanza then retired to rest; she found her mother better next day, but her anxiety about the baron unabated, no tidings having yet arrived of his approach. The countess received them in the morning, with evident wishes to conciliate, and efface from their memory the conversation which took place at her first interview.

Towards the middle of the day, a great noise of horses was heard in the court be-

—“It is my son returned,” said the dams. Costanza’s heart beat almost bly; the figure she had seen last rushed forcibly upon her imagination; who could it be but the count who entered his mother’s apartment at such hour? and if such was her destined end, she felt that it would be impossible to fulfil her engagement. She heard sound of approaching footsteps, and agony and impatience were almost insupportable: they stopped for a few moments in the anti-room; to her it seemed age of delay, and yet she dreaded the instant when the door should open. At the lord of Costanza’s destiny stood infest before her, and she contemplated, mixed sensations of astonishment and sure, the person and appearance of don Edmund di Luna, as he entered the room. His height was lofty and commanding, his motions easy and dignified, his countenance, though expressive of rage, strikingly handsome. He advanced with kindness and respect towards the ha-

roness, and expressed the satisfaction he felt at her safe arrival in Sciacca; lamenting the delay of the baron, and that his own absence from the castle had prevented his receiving her in person: but when he turned towards her daughter, admiration and delight seemed to have deprived him of the power of speech.

Costanza blushed deeply, and when her mother presented her, could scarcely stand, much less answer his incoherent compliments.

The baroness endeavoured to relieve her daughter's distress, and to engage the count's attention; whilst his mother stood near, apparently not entirely approving his evident admiration, and the total inattention to herself.—“Your *excellenza* is, I hope, returned but a short time before Solanto; the wind has been fair for the last two days, and my anxiety for his arrival hourly increases.”

“Beyond all expectation!” said don Sigismund, still gazing at Costanza.

The pause of wonder with which all

the party heard this reply, so foreign to the subject, roused Lama to remembrance; conscious of some mistake, yet perfectly in ignorance of the speech which had been addressed to him, he looked towards his mother for an explanation.

“ You seem not to have remembered, don Sigismund,” she said, “ that there were other claims to your attention here.” A frown was gathering on her brow, which Sigismund endeavoured instantly to disperse.

“ Forgive the admiration, dearest mother, which for a moment rendered me forgetful of your presence.” The affection and respect with which he kissed the countess’s hand, gave Costanza a sensation of exquisite pleasure.—“ You expected to have found the baron here, madame, I understand,” he said, again turning to the baroness; “ but the late storms may have induced him to stand out to sea; he may have put into Mazzara, and found a difficulty in doubling the Punta di Taurello,

or I have even known vessels some days in getting round Cape St. Mark."

"Your opinion is consolatory, signor," she answered, "as it gives me hope that no untoward accident occasions the delay."

"Even should the arrival of the bark be still some few days distant," he continued, "which however I do not think will be the case, I trust you will not unnecessarily indulge in anticipating evils, and we will not doubt that every thing will turn out which will be most to your comfort."

These kind endeavours to cheer her mother's drooping spirits were most gratefully felt and appreciated by Costanza.

"We met with a most dangerous and unpleasant accident on our journey during the heavy storm, but the kindness and attention of signor Pignatelli and his friend the cavalier Perollo, relieved us from all the ill consequences which might have followed it."

Luna started at the mention of Perollo; a shade passed over his countenance, and

day, he said—" Though I would willingly have been indebted to any other instrument for such a weight of obligation, yet I shall acknowledge this service with gratitude even to Federico Perollo."

The countess evidently wished to interrupt the conversation, and asked, in no very gentle tone, what friends he expected at the castle previous to the feast?

" Geronimo Peralta," he replied, " will be the only one who takes up his abode with us. The baron della Bardia is not, I fear, sufficiently recovered to attend; and Infontanetta has persuaded others of our friends to make his house their home. The baron Solanto," he added, cheerfully, " will be here in time to join in our solemnity, and witness the pride and satisfaction with which our family will welcome this auspicious visit."

" I should be very unwilling," the baroness answered, " that such an opportunity should be lost, of becoming personally known to your illustrious relatives; but

should the baron be unfortunately detained from hence, I fear my spirits will hardly be equal to a public introduction ; and under such circumstances, my daughter and myself must claim your indulgence, to excuse us from appearing at the approaching festival."

"Your will and pleasure, lady," said don Sigismund, "shall in all things be obeyed ; but I expect hourly to hear that the baron is in safety in our port."

"On an occasion like the present," said the countess, "when the duties of religion are in question, all private feelings must be sacrificed ; and when the honour of the house of Luna and Peralta is concerned, every one who feels its interest at heart will make it a first consideration. The baroness Solanto and her daughter must attend the approaching solemnity."

Even the meek spirit of the elder lady rose indignant at this insolent harangue ; a tinge of colour flushed in her cheeks, but she repressed her feelings, and looked in silence to don Sigismund.

“Our honoured guests are here,” he said, “not only to command their own engagements, but their wishes, and their will shall be supreme to every one over whom my influence extends.”

“ ‘Tis well, count Luna,” said his mother; “another power is, I see, again to be placed over me; insults and indignities will drive me from your house, but if once I depart, I never enter Luna Castle more.” With every feature distorted by rage, the lady quitted the apartment.

Don Sigismund attempted to soften down his mother’s ill behaviour, and the baroness, anxious to allay the storm, assured him, that to give the countess all the satisfaction in her power, she was perfectly willing to attend the devotions in the church, but begged to decline the ceremony of a formal introduction till the baron was present.

His gratitude for this conciliating kindness was gracefully and cordially expressed, and his manner had in it so much ardent admiration of Costanza, and respect towards her mother, that when he retired

to appease the furious countess, the former felt so well disposed to him, that all her reluctance to fulfil her engagement had vanished; and the recollection of the figure she had fancied was that of her destined husband, was no longer an object of terror to depress her spirits, but nearly forgotten in the satisfaction with which she thought of don Sigismund's manners and address.

Both ladies were silent for a few minutes after his departure; at length the baroness said—"Well, Costanza, is not don Sigismund terribly like the countess?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Oh! then you do not intend to throw yourself at your father's feet, and supplicate to be freed from your engagement."

"My dear mother!"

"Well, well, my child, I will not torment you; but, pray, let this agreeable disappointment be also a useful lesson to you—to argue more moderately, and not mistake your own fears for realities."

"I will do my best endeavours, but without the least hope of ever arriving at

the degree of Christian charity and meekness you possess; for instance, now, I felt a vast inclination to tell that violent old woman how disagreeable, violent, and absurd she was, and to persist in going to the feast or staying away at my own pleasure: and really, my dear mother, if she does not know how to behave with common civility, she should be taught, and a few such lessons would so much improve her."

" If she were as young as yourself, Costanza; there is no doubt but rational severity and opposition would be of infinite use to the countess; but at her age, to attempt new moulding her temper would be ridiculous; and the only chance of living comfortably with her, must be by avoiding subjects of dispute, and determining never to notice any ill-natured thing she either says or does; and, in short, treating her like a much more amiable person than she is."

" But surely, my dear mother, such conduct would be indulging ill-tempered people very undeservedly; and besides, it

seems to me so exceedingly mean-spirited to be overpowered by violence, when one knows one is right."

" You quite mistake the business ; for, in reality, to be humoured like a foward child who must not be punished, is no very enviable state ; but persons who need such treatment, usually aspiring to mere dominion, have neither delicacy or discrimination enough to care or understand why it is granted them. Young people are very apt to miscall wilfulness by the name of spirit, which term, by-the-bye, is so often applied to those who prefer their own will to that of every other person, and is altogether so indefinite, that for myself, I must confess, I feel, when I hear of a great spirit, as I should if people said at once, very obstinate or very unruly. With respect to your relative situation with the countess Caltabellotta, opposition will make her an irreconcilable enemy ; and cheerfully humouring her, a very ardent friend ; and every sacrifice which you make to the general happiness of his

nily, the comfort of his mother, and thereby to his own ease of mind, don Simund will not fail to appreciate, and more highly, as he was not, I hear, always accustomed to it; and if you are happy with him as I hope you will be, approbation will be more than a reward for all your self-control. But let us go to our room, and hear if Beatrice has sent him to the Marina, as I ordered."

## CHAPTER VII.

Can piety the discord heal,  
Or staunch the death-feud's enmity?  
Can Christian love, can patriot zeal,  
Can love of blessed charity?  
No! vainly to each holy shrine  
In mutual pilgrimage they drew,  
Implor'd in vain the grace divine,  
For chiefs their own red falchions slew.

WALTER SCOTT

FEDERICO, after the interview with his mother, retired to his own apartment, too much agitated to join in society; and the baron Pandolfini being occupied in public business, don Paolo offered his services to Gaetano to attend him wheresoever he might wish to go.

Pignatelli, anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, willingly accepted the offer, and they left the castle together, having declined, with all possible civility, the pi-

sence of the obsequious barone del Nadore, who seemed particularly anxious to ingratiate himself with the nephew of the viceroy, but met with little encouragement in his obsequious adulation.

“ I am, I fear, particularly ungrateful,” said Gaetano to his companion, “ but the professions of this new friend of mine, the barone del Nadore, are irksome in the extreme; I must be indebted for them to his affection for don Giacomo, but I sincerely wish he would transfer his numberless attentions and compliments to Federico, who can accommodate himself much more readily and patiently to the follies of his neighbours; besides, it would be showing more regard to the patron of the barone.”

“ Del Nadore,” replied don Paolo, “ never loses an opportunity of ingratiating himself with any one connected with the higher powers, and however lavish he may be in his speeches to yourself, he will still find an inexhaustible fund to try the temper of my young kinsman. I know that don Giacomo receives with the contempt it

deserves his fulsome flattery; but at the same time he believes Del Nadore to be attached to his interest, and that he is only weak and foolish; whereas I know him to be wicked and designing, and that the first advantage gained by the enemies of Pandolfina, would range this sycophant beneath their banners: he is too trifling a character to make him dangerous, but I wish we had not so many doubtful friends, or rather secret enemies, as spies upon our actions."

"The character of the baron Pandolfina appears to be such as to disarm the power of envy and detraction."

"Quite the contrary, my young friend; with every feeling of regard, affection, and respect for my kinsman's worth, I cannot be blind to those imperfections, rather in manner than in disposition, which may one day be the origin of wide-spreading and extensive evil."

"May I ask an explanation?"

"Certainly," said don Paolo; "the character of don Giacomo is such as his

friends must contemplate with pride, such as they cannot but love, respect, and almost idolize: warm, ardent, and sincere in his attachments—disinterested, liberal, and devoted to all that is honourable, good, and great, his very faults appear to spring from an excess of these amiable qualities: somewhat impetuous in his abhorrence of every thing which militates against those high and chivalrous principles which absorb his every thought and feeling, he too often expresses, in open unambiguous terms, his opinion of those he knows to have been once guilty of the vices he detests. Some of the highest of our city nobles, whose injustice, peculation, and oppressive tyranny, had reached the ears of the baron, he has publicly disgraced and eternally offended. His impetuous feelings, and strict honour, make no distinction between friends and foes; but where he finds cause for censure, unreflectingly and openly he gives it way: conscious of the rectitude and utility of his public measures, he proceeds directly forward, and neither atten to the pre-

judices of the weak, nor inform the understanding of the ignorant. Narrow-minded and illiberal persons are to be found in every society. At a distance from the scenes of public action, the minds of many individuals, habituated to the same routine, start with horror from every innovation, and receive with cautious suspicion every improvement on their usual habits. The education of don Giacomo has been in the courts of emperors and kings, and the enlightened ideas he there acquired, are unfortunately of too high a standard for the meridian of Sciacca; hence many even of our well-disposed neighbours regard the alterations, which perhaps they do not fully comprehend, as outrages to their habitual feelings and customs. But I am entering," he added, "too deeply into this subject; I had undertaken to introduce you to the city, not to the citizens of Sciacca; we are now on the Marina—that building before you is the house of the Jesuits."

"When I accepted your kind offices,

signor," answered Gaetano, " it was more from a desire to improve my acquaintance with one who has long been the theme of Federico's panegyric, than of parading through the streets of Sciacca; the view from this Marina however is strikingly magnificent—why should we extend our perambulation?"

" As you please," answered Perollo; " our city affords but few attractions to any one accustomed to the splendours of Palermo. The castles of Luna and Perollo are the principal private buildings here; the residences of the other nobles are far inferior in every respect."

" They appear to be numerous, elegant, and modern buildings," said Gaetano.

" Forty barons now reside within the walls, connected, I am sorry to add, by party animosity or party affection with our rival houses; would I could think, with the worthy Geronimo Ferrara, that our feuds are nearly at an end! but neither the character of don Sigismund di Luna, nor that of Giacomo Perollo, are

formed to close the wounds of civil discord which have now had the strength of age to fester and inflame."

"Have these hereditary contests existed so long then?" asked Gaetano.

"Nearly a century and a half ago, I believe we may date the unhappy seeds of contest."

"Long and anxiously," returned Pignatelli, "I have wished to hear the origin of these jars and animosities; Federico however has always avoided indulging my curiosity."

"He has, I hope," answered don Paolo, "been so far removed from the scene of party rage, that it has at present stamped its characters but feebly on his mind, and the less frequently the recollections are recalled, the better; I will therefore undertake the office of historian, if you will accept such imperfect accounts as my memory can furnish."

"Most gratefully, signor," answered his companion, eager to accept the offer.

Don Paolo then proposed that they

should retire to his residence, and on their way thither Gaetano asked his opinion of Count Luna.

Perollo smiled at the request.—“To ask,” he said, “the character of the chief of Luna and Peralta from any member of our family, is taxing our impartiality and candour somewhat heavily, but I will try how far I can forget the prejudices of birth and education, to reply to you.—Sigismund di Luna is, I believe, brave, generous, and noble, warm-hearted to his friends, enthusiastic in his attachments, but impetuous, violent, and haughty; proud of his illustrious birth and family, he looks with jealousy on the superior power and popularity of don Giacomo. The count is young, his education has been confined, and his mother has acquired a power over him, which she exerts to irritate, rather than to sooth his impetuous temper; and others are not wanting to assist her. The rank and influence of don Sigismund in Sciacca having made him the rallying point of all whom his rival has

offended, and these men uniting to compass their revenge, continually urge him on by every argument their hatred and vengeance can dictate: in almost any other case, the generous good-nature of Pandolfini would make allowance for the sallies of a hot-headed young man driven to hostilities by those around him; but the hereditary dislike which early education has planted in him against the very names of Luna and Peralta, no power of reason can eradicate, and he too commonly indulges in ridiculing the ineffectual threats and denunciations of his enemies, with the pompous grandeur, and perhaps arrogant pretensions, of don Sigismund himself."

Having reached the house of don Paolo, his new friend lost no time in gratifying Pignatelli with the promised detail.

"Our family, in this unhappy history," said Perollo, "may perhaps be justly condemned as the first transgressors; and as I cannot but feel a bias to their side, you must in justice, signor, make all due allow-

ance for my prejudices ; but I will, with all the impartiality I can command, recount the rise and progress of these evils. It is necessary to go back as far as the death of don Nicholo Peralta, count of Caltabellotta, one of our first Sicilian nobles, of royal lineage, and of enormous wealth. His death took place about the year 1391, leaving behind him three daughters, his coheiresses, Giovanna, Margarita, and Costanza, between whom the accumulated honours, riches, and possessions of the house, were to be divided ; whilst the inheritance they derived from their mother, Elizabetha Chiaramonte, added to their paternal domains, made them the wealthiest heiresses of their time. By their father's will, however, they were restricted from marrying, without the consent of don Martin, king of Aragon and Sicily, the infanta Leonora of Aragon, their grandmother, the cardinal of Santa Chiesa, the count of Modica, and one or two other noble relatives, amongst whom was don Giacomo

Perollo, lord of Castelamare. Such a variety of guardians to propitiate, might have made any suitor hopeless, and in endeavouring to secure his daughters from improper matches, don Nicholo had almost condemned them to perpetual celibacy.

“ Giovanna, the eldest, died soon after her father, and Artalo di Luna, relying on his relationship to his sovereign, don Martin, demanded the lady Margarita, heiress of the county of Caltabellotta, in marriage; but his demand, though supported by the consent and authority of the monarch, was instantly rejected by the infanta, by Giacomo Perollo, and all the other guardians. Luna however persevered, and after many months dispute, the sovereign authority was exerted, and the king commanded the marriage to be solemnized, whilst the other parties could only protest in vain against the act.

“ From this union of the houses of Luna and Peralta, their descendants have since borne the united names of both their progenitors. Antonio di Luna and Pe-

ralta, count of Caltabellotta, and grand constable of the kingdom, was the first fruit of the marriage of don Artalo and Margarita. The opposition of don Giacomo Perollo had throughout the discussion been active and determined, an offence which Artalo di Luna never could forgive: the hatred which rankled in his bosom descended to his son, and count Antonio remembered but too well the lessons of irreconcilable enmity he had imbibed against our house, of which Pietro Perollo, baron of San Bartolomeo, was the first to feel the effects: against him the count instituted a suit, and finally succeeded in depriving him of his barony.

“ The fierce temper of Perollo could ill brook this injury; he considered that he had been unjustly deprived of his hereditary rights, and vowed never to put the armour from his back, till he had fully and deeply revenged his wrongs on the head of Antonio di Luna. Knowing the martial spirit of don Pietro, his resolute and

determined perseverance, and dreading the vengeance of his powerful connexions, the count Antonio withdrew to Caltabellotta, and fortified himself against the attacks with which he was threatened by don Pietro's vow of vengeance. From the fortress of count Luna, emissaries were continually sent out, by private assassination to cut off the object of his hatred and fear; but the valour and activity of Pietro, and his devoted friends, preserved him from their snares; whilst these instances of discovered treachery served only to strengthen the determination of the party of Perollo, and incite them more violently to pursue and to exterminate their insidious foe.

“ The faithful and ancient ally of our house, count Geraci and Ventimiglia, joined his powerful aid, and warmly espoused the cause of don Pietro, having himself been deeply injured by Antonio di Luna. Many were their deliberations on the means of compassing their plans of vengeance; but whilst within the walls of Caltabellotta,

their enemy might mock at their power, and defy their most violent assaults. This he appeared so well aware of, that for some months he never ventured beyond his walls, and frustrated all their intended schemes and resolutions; but the hour of their revenge arrived at length. To-morrow, as you have heard, signor, is the anniversary of the festival of the Santa Spina. These relics were conferred on the convent of Santa Maria d'Istria by one of the ancestors of the Peralta family, and his descendants have at all times most scrupulously attended this feast.

“ The count Antonio, trusting to the sanctity of the occasion, and to the time which had elapsed, determined to leave his retirement, and not abandon the attendance which all his family had shewn to the relics, since first count William had bestowed them on the convent. Of his determination, the friends of Perollo were well aware, and blinded by their fury, regarded not the holiness of the meeting; before the torrent of their vindictive fren-

zy, all the barriers of piety, religion, and humanity, were swept away, and even in the sacred procession they resolved to shed the blood of Antonio di Luna.

“ The anniversary of to-morrow, in the year 1455, gave birth to an event, which no time can ever eradicate from the memory of Luna or Perollo, as long as their names endure in Sciacca. As has always been the case, the streets were thronged by daybreak with the crowds of villagers and citizens; the nobles of the surrounding country, with all their vassals and retainers, were assembled to grace the solemnity; the balconies and windows, filled with the females of rank, and the bells from the churches, announced the hour for the procession to begin. Antonio had arrived the evening before, with a numerous train of valiant cavaliers, at the Castello di Luna; and Perollo, with his band, were placed in ambush in one of the streets through which the pageant was to pass. In breathless anxiety don Pietro and his friends awaited the hour which should gra-

tify their sanguinary vengeance; the sacred banners of the various convents were displayed, the holy relics borne through the streets by the prior of Santa Maria, and followed by the nobles of the city, at whose head was count Luna: the procession had reached the open space before the church of St. Nicholas and Santa Caterina, when, with shouts of triumph and revenge, Perollo and his associates burst from their concealment. No moment was left for escape or for defence; the sword of Pietro had felled Antonio to the ground, before himself, or those about him, were aware from whence the danger came; confusion and dismay spread rapidly around; the officers of religion, and unarmed citizens, fled in all directions to their churches and houses, and the city resounded with cries of terror and alarm; no one knew the extent of the evil which they feared; screams of murder and affright were echoed from one to another, and the multitude on all sides dispersed from the scene of blood and sacrilege, the victorious assailants indulged

unopposed their thirst for revenge; the wounded and mangled body of Luna was trodden in the dust by their adherents, who, having satiated their fury, left their enemy, as they supposed, the slaughtered victim of their successful enterprise, and, mounting their horses, fled through the gate of St. Nicholas, to shelter themselves in the Castle of Geraci, under the protection of Ventimiglia, an aider and abettor in the outrage.

“ The first moments of surprise having passed over, the friends of Luna rallied round his body, which had been abandoned during the confusion; and the opposite party having fled, they conveyed it without any obstruction to the Castel di Luna. Life was not extinct, and by the care and skill of his attendants, the count was restored to animation, and after a long and tedious confinement, finally recovered from the barbarous attack.

“ With returning life and strength, the bosom of don Antonio throbbed for vengeance and redress: it required no more

than a plain statement of facts to call, round the standard of Luna and Peralta, every friend whom the ties of blood or friendship had connected with their race. Nobles and dependants crowded in numbers to his aid, and when capable of leading his faithful followers, he found a numerous and willing multitude, ready and anxious to avenge their chieftain's cause, and wreak his vengeance on all the name of Perollo.

“ In vain they searched every house and castle belonging to his family. Pietro, in safety under Geraci's roof, escaped their vindictive purpose; but fire and sword were unsparingly let loose against all his vassals and adherents; marks of the desolation which they spread abroad may still be seen around the neighbouring country, and for some months these scenes of havoc and destruction were continued, involving the innocent and the guilty in one common ruin; every law was outraged and insulted; till at length the royal power was

called forth, and both parties banished from the island ; but after some lapse of time, king Alphonso summoned to his court the contending chiefs, a public reconciliation was effected, and both returned to Sciacca ; yet still the embers of their hatred have continued burning fiercely under this outward show, and since that day, though somewhat damped and weakened, have never been extinguished, and, with the dispositions of the present chiefs of the two factions, are, I fear, more likely to flame out anew, than to expire in oblivion and peace. Such, my young friend," added don Paolo, " are the foundations on which this unfortunate feud hath arisen ; numberless bickerings and irritating circumstances have at various times occurred to manifest the dispositions of both parties to renew those deeds of open violence, of which you have just heard the long detail ; your patience has been tried, and your curiosity probably been disappointed in the narration, which only records the mutual acts of ungoverned passion and re-

venge, so long disgraceful to the houses of Luna and Perollo."

Gaetano expressed his gratitude to don Paolo for the trouble he had given him, and thanked him for the interesting history of events, so nearly connected with his earliest friend—"In Federico," he added, "all hatred to the house of Luna is extinct, and from the principles he has imbibed, I feel convinced that no private wrong will induce him to involve his family and friends in civil broils; nor will he ever assume to himself the right of redressing his individual quarrels, by any outrage to the laws and justice of his country."

"Would that don Sigismund," replied Perollo, "had received in early life the advantages which Federico has enjoyed, that he had been removed from these scenes, and from the arts of those who now surround him: he is not, I believe, naturally ill-disposed, but the lessons of his mother, and the constant excitations of the party about him, have rendered him irrit-

able, and jealous of every act don Giacomo performs. His narrow education prevents his entering into the liberal and enlightened plans of Pandolfini; and even some marks of civility, which my kinsman's benevolent disposition shews to all, have been rejected by Luna with insult and disdain: his late wife, the countess Lucretia, as niece to Clement, violently espoused the cause of the pontiff, and for the sake of his Imperial master, most cordially detested the loyalty of Pandolfini; but she is now no more; strange and mysterious rumours are abroad respecting her sudden death; but such are always prevalent, when any one of rank is snatched away without a previous illness; internal and domestic discord interrupted count Sigismund's matrimonial comfort; his mother and his wife, both fond of power, tormented him by ceaseless contests, yet the marriage was the ardent wish of the elder lady, and the character of count Luna stands too high for suspicion to attach to

him; the various rumours are most likely the vague discourses of the ignorant and idle."

"The affianced bride of don Sigismund," said Gaetano, "appears to be all that is captivating in manners and disposition. and a lovelier person never was beheld."

"The baron Solanto," observed don Paolo, "is powerful and wealthy: he will, I hope, take up his abode in Sciacca, and not leave this young creature exposed to the violence of count Luna, the ill humour of his mother, the machinations of the baron Adriano, and the terrors of Accursi d'Amato's friendship and acquaintance. Such are the friends of her destined husband, and the inmates of Luna Castle, that, unprotected and at a distance from her family, she would be exposed to certain misery, without a friend to advise or to assist her."

"The baron Solanto," replied Pignatelli, "is a brave and noble soldier; the baroness gentleness itself; they surely will not sacrifice their only child to such an ill-

boding connexion, when further intimacy has made them more acquainted with the family of count Luna."

"The wealth and power possessed by the relatives of lady Costanza, I apprehend," said Perollo, "will tempt the countess to use every artifice which may disguise her natural disposition; and if the count himself is captivated by her beauty and virtues, it will be some restraint upon his violence. Geronimo Peralta can at all times gloss over his malignant purposes; whilst for Accursi d'Amato, shrouded as he generally is in mystery and darkness, it may be long before they have an opportunity of forming an opinion of his real character."

"This signor d'Amato appears a strangely-suspicious person," said Gaetano; "if I mistake not, he intended us an interview upon our journey."

"Indeed!" exclaimed don Paolo, looking earnestly at his companion.

"He appears to have followed Federico from Palermo; Baptista saw him first at

Alcamo; next he appeared amidst the ruins of Segesta; afterwards, by entering the castle in the train of the baroness Solanto, he nearly succeeded in reaching our chamber at Castel Vetrano, but was alarmed by the outcries of the terrified domestics, who slept in the anteroom."

"And from whom did you learn that it was Accursi?" asked Perollo.

"We have only suspicion to guide us," said Gaetano; "having heard that he left Castel Vetrano that night, and crossed the fiumara on the road to Sciacca."

"It has been reported," said don Paolo, "that he has for some time been confined by illness; but he may have been absent on some dark scheme of assassination and revenge."

"The description of him by Baptista, though in a style of the broadest caricature, must identify his person—a gigantic figure, with a most cadaverous countenance and air; towering plumes of black feathers, and a cloak of the same funereal dye, were the characteristics of the unknown stranger,

who appeared to the valet as more than a mortal visitant."

" Though a little exaggerated, the portrait must have been taken from the barone della Bardia, and answers perfectly to his usual habit and appearance."

" But how can Federico have given him offence?"

" In being the son of don Giacomo Perollo, a crime in the eyes of Della Bardia to justify even midnight murder; his vindictive fury against Pandolfina has in it perhaps more deadly malice than all the house of Luna are possessed with."

" And whence did this arise?" asked Pignatelli.

" Placed in one of the principal offices in Sciacca," replied Perollo, " his violence, extortion, and oppression, called forth the severest censures of my kinsman, who, by the power the viceroy has conferred upon him, dismissed d'Amato from his office with ignominy and reproach, obliging him to restore, in some degree, the fruits of his rapacity, and exposing him before the as-

sembled council of the city. The deep and deadly vow of vengeance which the infuriated baron uttered, was heard by Pandolfina with contempt, and only answered by derision and defiance; for myself, I cannot but wish that a less hostile method had been taken in his dismissal, though Della Bardia certainly deserved the correction he received. The time however, signor Pignatelli, has worn apace, and requires our return to the castle. I had intended to ask from you some account of the habits and manners of Federico; but I have, I find, been leading on a conversation, which has carried us to subjects of a far different nature."

"I think, signor," said Gaetano, "that you will find that Federico has as few, if not fewer, vices than any of his contemporaries in age and rank; but you will perhaps find cause to wish that he was not possessed of feelings quite so vehement, and susceptible of impressions quite so lasting."

On his return to the castle, Gaetano was

encountered by a messenger, who had been sent to inform him that a courier from Trapani had brought dispatches for him, which were of some importance, and which he found to contain intelligence respecting the affair of the unfortunate cavalier Landolini, who was at the time confined by illness, occasioned principally by agitation at some tidings he had received from the fishermen, who had seen his cassino in flames on the night of its destruction. They were returned to Trapani, and reported that they had observed, towards the close of evening, a light shallop hovering off the coast, and from its suspicious appearance, it was perhaps one of the piratic vessels with which the seas were infested. This information was too vague for hope, yet sufficiently well authenticated to excite the most agonizing feelings of suspense in the bosom of the father; and weakened as he had been by previous grief and anxiety, it had brought on so severe an indisposition as to have confined him to his bed. Under these circum-

tances, he had fulfilled his promise to Gaetano in communicating the intelligence he had received, but without suggesting any plan of proceeding, and only concluded by lamenting the absence of his young friend at the present juncture.

Pignatelli instantly sought Federico—“ You must assist me,” he said, “ Perollo, with all your interest in the baron Pandolfini to send me hence without delay.”

Federico was silent, for a few moments, with astonishment, and Gaetano put into his hand the letter from Landolini. Having read it, he observed, that against so imperative a call, nothing could be urged, but that he saw no immediate benefit which was to be hoped from a journey to Trapani.

“ To Tunis,” said Pignatelli.

“ Let us consult my father, and permit me to be your companion in the expedition.”

“ To the former part of the proposal, I readily answer yes; but to the latter, my dear Federico, there are insurmountable

objections ; besides, any companion might impede my motions ; but your father shall decide."

On the first mention of the project, the baron Pandolfini hesitated as to the expediency of Gaetano's proposed voyage, and the propriety of his undertaking it without the approbation of his uncle ; but when every circumstance was fully explained to him, he gave his decided approbation to the plan, and even added further arguments in its favour, by confirming the supposition that the destruction of the cassino had been effected by pirates, as he had received intelligence, in his official capacity, that such vessels had lately been seen off the coasts, and in some instances the crews from them had landed by stealth, destroyed detached houses, and carried the inhabitants into slavery ; the western coast was also at the time peculiarly liable to such aggressions, a powerful Turkish fleet cruising between Sicily and Malta, and no European power sufficiently free from contests nearer home, to engage against the

services of Giacomo. The former and his wife seemed to be the great object of the cardinal's solicitude; in cases of violent resistance they had suffered but few losses. The daughter of Lambrino might then probably be spared—might possibly be restored to her distressed mother.

The full use of his power and influence in any way was freely offered by the baron, who engaged to provide means for the voyage, and to furnish Gaetano with an introduction to the secret agent of the Sicilian government at Tunis. With regard to Federico attending his friend, don Giacomo opposed it, upon the plea of its inutility, and the chance that it might prove an impediment to Pignatelli. To put the remonstrances of his son to silence at once, he urged the distress it would be to his mother to part with him immediately on his arrival, and promised that if Gaetano, on reaching Tunis, considered the presence of his friend as likely to forward his designs, that he should be permitted to follow without delay. It was impossible for

the necessary arrangements to be made that night; but on the following evening, the baron thought every thing would be in readiness, and that they should, in the intermediate time, have leisure to consider on the proper steps to be taken; and it was resolved that the subject should only be mentioned to the confidential members of the family, and that Gaetano, by attending the celebration of the festival on the morrow, should endeavour to prevent any suspicion from being excited that an expedition of the kind was in agitation.

CHAPTER VIII.  
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*E segna il mobil volto or di colore  
Di rabbioso disdegno, ed or d'amore.*      Tasso.

As the sun rose the next day, the artillery of the city of Sciacca proclaimed the approaching festival; they were answered from the battlements of Perollo Castle; and to honour the devotion of the citizens, the vessels in the bay hoisted their gayest colours, and saluted the rising light by a discharge of all their arms, whilst the bells from the various churches and convents sounded a deafening peal within the walls. The gates had been thronged for hours by the peasants, and hundreds had patiently taken their stations in the streets through which the procession was to pass; their pockets filled with boiled maize for their subsistence through the day, and their minds fully occupied with their own splen-

did appearance in their holiday clothes, and the anticipated grandeur and solemnity of their annual pageant, they felt neither anxiety nor impatience, but quietly waited for hours the procession of the holy relics.

The devotion of a Sicilian peasant has no gloomy Calvinistic character, is neither torpid nor indifferent, but is the delight, the business, the amusement of his life. If, through attachment to some particular saint or image, he misdirects his prayers and adoration, still his faith is ardent and sincere, and his services are paid with warm and enthusiastic pleasure. The days which are consecrated to the feasts and festivals of their church, are neither spent in Bacchanalian revels, nor misanthropic and gloomy seclusion, but in participating with all around them in the joy and hilarity which such seasons bring. The gay and splendid dresses of the saints, and their religious attendants, the lights and music in their churches, aided by the charms of statuary and painting, are felt by the lowest and

most uneducated amongst them; their habits are temperate, their indulgences few, and the relaxation of their religious ceremonies, the first and greatest pleasure which they know.

Amidst the crowd assembled in the streets of Sciacca to witness the procession of the day, there was no riot or confusion. To a stranger, perhaps, the vehement tones and gesticulations of some of the parties, might have been mistaken for debate and strife, but was in fact only the natural effusion of their buoyant spirits and habitual animation; all was order, peace, and happiness amongst the multitude assembled on the occasion: but individuals there were within the walls, in whose bosoms the festive sounds found no responsive echoes of delight.

The baroness Solanto, with a sigh of sad and sickening disappointment, had heard again that the night had passed without the arrival of her long-expected lord. Costanza witnessed with regret the

languor and uneasiness of her mother's spirits; nor had the attentions of don Sigismund di Luna been able to divert her thoughts from the anxious uneasiness which her father's delay occasioned. She felt indeed relieved, from a considerable weight of care, by the favourable impression her future husband's manners and appearance had made upon her, and contemplated with complacency, rather than regret, the destiny which seemed to have united their years to come.

The countess was the only object of uncomfortable recollection, and to her she felt an abhorrence greater perhaps than her unpleasant manners and disposition might appear to justify; she saw, or fancied that she saw, a fiendlike and malignant temper, only kept in awe by some temporary and violent exertion, which seemed to sit uneasily, and with such difficulty as could not long be overcome; but still her mother's weak state, and almost hourly-increasing illness, and her father's long and unexpected delay, were predominant.

The baroness, faithful to her promise to don Sigismund, prepared to attend the countess Caltabellotta to the principal church, where the procession went from the convent of Santa Maria, the count and his family connexions attending it through the streets.

On joining the lady of the castle, Costanza perceived the gaze of dissatisfied ill-humour with which she regarded her mother and herself. The baroness apologized for the plainness of their attire, as they left their heavy baggage to come by sea from Palermo, and it had not yet arrived. She herself was handsomely, though simply dressed, and Costanza covered with a light and elegant veil, which shewed in every fold the graceful form beneath it. Their Spanish costume was a crime in the eyes of the countess, even of more weight than the want of gorgeous ornament and splendid decoration.—“ Count Sigismund di Luna will, I think, be little flattered to see his family connexions thus masquerad-

ing in a foreign dress," she said; " why Pandolfini's wife could not have shewn a greater scorn for every thing Sicilian."

" Count Sigismund perhaps," answered Costanza, " may have sufficient cause to blush for his family connexions; to us he would scarcely think of owning it; yet their conduct may be too offensive to suffer the baron di Solanto to ally his house with theirs."

The baroness trembled with agitation, and attempted in vain to arrest her daughter's indignation.

" I honour," she continued, " my father's native land; but even the house of Luna and Peralta may with pride anticipate an union with the De Castro's Spanish blood, should such union take place hereafter."

Don Sigismund entered the apartment while Costanza was still speaking; he looked at her with astonishment and admiration: her veil was half thrown back, and the glow of indignation which mantled in her cheeks, and sparkled in her eyes, gave a dignity both to her form and

features, which, for an instant, appeared to awe even the countess herself. The count looked to his mother for an explanation; pale, and with a tone of hoarse but restrained passion, she said—"I did indeed presume to intimate to these ladies an opinion, that the costume of this country might have been a more appropriate compliment to the solemnity of the day, than the new-fangled dresses of another."

"And who could wish to see the lady Costanza other than she is?" exclaimed Luna.

"I am glad your lordship likes such a spirit," said the countess, in an under-tone; "but grieved to see how little you regard the deference your mother's name and rank demand."

"Allow me," said Sigismund, regardless of her reply, "allow me to see you on your way; my friends are gone to Santa Maria's: when I have had the honour to see you to the Church of the Incarnation, I must join the party preparing for the procession;" and taking the hand of the

baroness Solanto, he led her from the apartment, her daughter attending at his side.

The countess and her suite followed; so by the time they had arrived at the church, Costanza appeared to have regained her self-possession.

Don Sigismund apologized by the way for the vehemence of his mother, and appeared anxious to sooth the irritated feelings of Costanza by every means in his power.

Without relaxing in her opinion of his mother's ill conduct, the attentions of the count gratified her, and excited in her a favourable inclination to him. Arrived at the church, Sigismund left the ladies, to hasten to the convent of San Maria, and the countess preceded the guests to their station near the high altar. The walls of the church were hung with the richest tapestry; the altars gaily dressed with flowers, and the statues of the saints in their best attire. The interior is not yet crowded to excess, most

the multitude having taken their places in the streets to accompany the relics in their progress. The countess advanced with all the state and dignity she could assume, and approaching the altar, knelt for several minutes before it, apparently unconscious of all around her. The baroness and her daughter knelt beside her, and when they rose from the position, in looking round her on the opposite side of the altar, the latter recognized, amidst a numerous group of persons magnificently attired, the companions of her journey, Federico Perollo and Gaetano Pignatelli; the eyes of the former had been rivetted on the lovely companion of the countess Luna ever since her entrance, and when, throwing back her veil, she returned their salutation, he stood fixed in admiration, the colour mounted to his cheeks, and he seemed inattentive to every thing beside.

Costanza saw Gaetano bend forward to one of the ladies of the party, who seeing the baroness rise from her knees, after an instant, advanced from the surrounding

band of ladies and cavaliers, towards the place where they were stationed, and the two young men attended her.

The countess raised her head at their approach, rose from her seat, and with a look of horror and indignation, retreated, as far as her situation would admit, from the intruders; and silent to the salutation paid to herself, she returned only a look of assumed contempt and haughty defiance.

“My anxiety to meet so old and dear a friend,” said the lady, “could only have been restrained by circumstances as forcible as those which hitherto have prevented Victoria Moncada from greeting the baroness Solanto on her arrival in Sciacca; my son and signor Pignatelli had informed me of the happiness I might expect, when circumstances would permit this interview.”

The baroness wept upon her bosom, too overpowered to speak.

Gaetano hoped to Costanza that her mother’s health had not suffered from her journey.

“Anxiety for my dear father, and her own weak health, have prevented her recovering the fatigue of her journey, or ral-lying her spirits since the first disappoint-ment.”

Federico was too busily employed in looking at, and listening to Costanza, to remember any necessity for speaking himself.

“The signora di Solanto,” said Gaetano, introducing her to the baroness Pandolfini.

“We shall, I hope, not long remain strangers,” said the baroness, extending her hand, which Costanza was about to take, when the countess Luna rushed rudely between them.—“We must withdraw,” she said, “from this intrusion, till some of the friends of the count shall arrive to protect us from these insults.”

The baroness raised her head from the bosom of her friend, gave her an affectionate blessing and embrace, and was about to yield to the insolent fury of the countess, when Costanza, taking her arm, replied—“We shall, I think, be more se-

cure from rudeness, insult, and aggression, in any society than that of the countess Caltabellotta, and we will not retire."

The spirits of the baroness could hold out no longer, and she would have sunk upon the pavement, had she not been supported by Perollo and his mother; a fainting fit came on, Costanza's anger subsided in alarm, and the countess again withdrew to the furthest possible spot from the objects of her bitter detestation.

Two or three of the ladies who had attended the baroness Pandolfini now advanced, and rendered every assistance in their power; the exertions of Costanza were called forth, and her mother was recovered.—"My intemperate vehemence," she exclaimed, "can never be forgiven; but even the provocation of the countess Luna shall tempt me no more."

"Hush! hush, my love!" said her mother, embracing her; "thanks to my kind friends, I feel again restored; but I fear I am too weak at present to withdraw."

"The entrance to the church," observed

Gaetano, "is so crowded, that it would be difficult, if not impossible."

" You had better remain and recover here," said the baroness Pandolfini; " I regret that my impatient friendship should have caused this altercation and distress, but could not resist the impulse of my feelings to welcome you to Sciacca; as soon as your excellenza is at liberty to receive my visits, we shall, I hope, renew our former friendship and intercourse."

" It will be to me a pleasure beyond my power to express," answered the baroness.

The party collected round the ladies, whilst aiding Costanza in supporting her mother, entered into conversation with her, to spare the returning strength of the invalid, who was still feeble and languid.

The procession from the convent of Santa Maria at length began to gratify the expecting multitude; the sacred banner of crimson satin, with an embroidered figure of the Virgin and Child, was borne forth, attended by all the convent servants; next followed that of the city, and close

behind, the blazoned dragon of the house of Luna and Peralta. The barone del Nadore, Pietro Laurifici, and the two other giurati or principal magistrates of Sciacca, succeeded, in their splendid robes of office; after whom were borne the massive crosses and candlesticks belonging to the various churches and convents, each preceded by the censer-bearers, who filled the air with clouds of perfume. The lay-brothers of the religious orders followed; after whom came the monks themselves, in all their varying costume; the black and flowing robes of the Benedictines, the white vestments of the Carmelites, and brown and sordid garments of the brothers of St. Francis, formed a contrast with each other, and with the white and gold embroidered dresses of the parish priests who followed them. A band of music, with the best singers of every choir in the city, preceded the prior who bore the sacred relics; his principal officers attended him; and immediately behind came don Sigismund di Luna; the splendour of his armour threw

a lustre round his tall and graceful figure. A chain of the richest workmanship hung from his shoulders, and his uncovered head, which towered above the surrounding multitude, might have been considered a model of manly beauty, had not a high and haughty character, somewhat like insolent disdain, and a look of impatient violence, thrown a shade over his features, which generally rendered them more strikingly-handsome than agreeable. Behind him walked all the noble cavaliers of Scicca and the neighbouring country, who were attached to the house of Luna, or not immediately connected with that of Perollo, the baron Adriano, the brothers of Infontanetta Calogero, and Geronimo Calandrino, all the members of the illustrious houses of Imbiagnia, Vasco, and Lucchese, with a countless multitude of attendants, who filled every avenue from the convent to the Church of the Incarnation.

The procession moved slowly through the streets, and as the splendid casket which contained the sacred treasure was

borne along, the crowd, in silent adoration, knelt before it.

The chant of the choristers alone was heard, neither disorder nor confusion prevailed, and had the heavy tread of the tending train been hushed, the distant waves might have been distinguished, in the deepest midnight stillness. The gay and brilliant pageant glittered in the bright beams of an unclouded Sicilian sky; from every window were displayed the richest tapestry, damask, and brocade. A scene more calculated to captivate the fancy, or dazzle the imagination, of people who generally act from impulse rather than reflection, could not well be conceived. The heat within the church, from the increasing multitude, rendered the baroness Solanto still faint and almost unable to support herself; as the countess Luna kept aloof, the baroness Pandolfini and her friends remained with her, rendering all the aid and comfort they were able.

The procession was some time in reachi

the church, and the pressure caused by the crowd who entered with it, rendered it still more oppressive. As count Sigismund passed up the body of the church, his eye wandered in search of Costanza and his mother. The countess soon caught his attention, but the Solantos were not by her; the disorder apparent in her looks, and the frown upon her brow, alarmed him; and when he soon after recognized the object of his search, surrounded by a party, some of whom he knew to be the family and adherents of don Giacomo Perollo, forgetful of every thing besides, he attempted to rush from the line of the procession; the crowd, however, prevented his advancing, and he was compelled to wait till the party before him had found their way to their respective stations. The countess also seemed impatient to rejoin her son, and advanced, as far as she was able, to meet him. Don Sigismund's attention however was rivetted upon the party round the baroness Solanto, whose illness was apparent in her countenance;

she seemed reposing almost in a state of insensibility in the arms of the baroness Pandolfini, whilst Costanza was endeavouring to revive her. Two young men, with whom he was totally unacquainted, appeared to be deeply interested in the scene, and several ladies of the Perollo party were gathered round them—the countess met him when he had nearly reached the group.—“ ’Tis well, count Luna, you are arrived to protect me, at least, from the insults to which your absence has exposed us.”

“ My mother,” exclaimed Costanza, “ must be instantly removed; we are indebted to the kindness of the baroness Pandolfini and these cavaliers, for that assistance which the violence of the countess Caltabellotta, and the oppressive heat, have rendered necessary.”

“ Accept my grateful thanks, signor,” said don Sigismund to Federico, “ and aid me in reaching my friends; we may then be able to convey the baroness from the church.”

" 'Tis the son of Giacomo Ferullo," ex-  
claimed the countess, in a tone of honest  
amazement.

Sigismund started . . . impudent crimson  
enspread his count . . . " I have al-  
ready received too great an indulgence from  
our hands, signor Ferullo," he replied,  
and beg you will excuse your party, and  
we these ladies in her . . . protection ;  
y friends will soon . . . "

" My mother may  
anger," said Con-  
en will continue  
th your assistance  
e side-doors."

" Impossible," replied Luna; " we can-  
t accept the services of a Ferullo, and  
ust await the arrival of my friends."

" I entreat you, count Luna," said Con-  
en, " not to sacrifice my mother to  
ese party feelings. She shuns again  
ssist me, gentlemen ; we can, we must,  
ake our way with the aid of those around  
."

Don Sigismund stood irresolute, whilst

Gaetano and Federico prepared to obey Costanza, and raising the baroness, attempted to make their way.

"Here come the baron Adriano and don Geronimo Calandrino," said Luna; "we will not trouble these cavaliers."

"Let us proceed, signor Pignatelli," continued Costanza, without hearing the count.

"We may, I think," said Federico, "escape by yonder door."

"Stay, young lady, I command you!" vociferated the countess.

"Command, madam, those unfortunate menials whom fortune has placed within the reach of your violence," said Costanza. "For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, convey my mother out instantly, and without hesitation."

"I am obliged, though unwillingly, to interfere," interrupted Luna. "These cavaliers must retire."

"Count Luna, my mother cannot be detained an instant."

" My friends can assist the baroness, signora."

" Our friends, count Luna, are able to perform all the service we require."

The disturbance which the debate occasioned near the altar, excited the attention of every one. Calandrino pushed rudely by Gaetano, and attempted to take the baroness, who had relapsed into insensibility.—" Excuse me, signor," he said; " I cannot resign my charge unless that lady wishes it."

" My friends and myself, signora," continued Luna, " must beg you to request that your mother may be entrusted to our care."

" This cruel interference, signor, only delays us in escaping from the crowd."

The young men had now nearly reached the door, followed by Sigismund and several of his friends. The countess was separated from her son by the interposing multitude, but exerted herself violently to reach him.

" Can --- put up with public insults

like these? The house of Luna and Peralta never knew disgrace till now. Thus to lacquey the heels of young Perollo! even let them take their prize to Pandolfini's castle."

Sigismund seized the arm of Federico—  
“ Signor, you must resign your burthen.”

“ Impossible,” said Perollo, shaking him off, and by a considerable exertion reaching the doorway; “ our office is now nearly done, and we shall resign our charge into your lordship's care.”

They conveyed the baroness into a porch exposed to the outer air, where she soon shewed symptoms of returning animation.

“ If our services can be of further use, lady Costanza,” said Gaetano, “ I entreat you will command us.”

“ The unasked attentions you have shewn, signor,” said Sigismund, “ must here cease, and the ladies now remain with me.”

“ I did not address myself,” replied Pignatelli, “ to count Luna, nor shall I consult either his will or inclination on the subject.”

“ The ladies, signor, are under my care and protection ; for the assistance you have rendered them, I am your debtor. There can be no further need for your attendance.”

The baroness recovered sufficiently to express a wish to be taken to the castle.

“ Signor Perollo,” said Costanza, “ I trust that I feel, as I ought to do, the obligations we have received from yourself and your friends ; some other opportunity will, I hope, soon occur, when those who feel interested in us will express a sense of your kindness, in a manner less offensive to both of us than at present seems probable : by your assistance we have escaped from our difficulties, but you may now leave us with count Luna.”

Sigismund shook with emotion—“ Your trifling services,” he said, “ signor Perollo, are, I hope, amply repaid by the lady’s flattering compliments ; for myself, it is impossible to deny the unwillingness with which I receive them at your hands. Circumstances have given you this advantage

over me ; but I cannot express a satisfaction which I feel not, at the rejection of my offered service to the ladies, and their acceptance of yours."

" It is with great reluctance, count Luna," answered Federico, " that I am tempted into any discussion on the subject; neither myself, nor my friend, claim any thanks for the performance of a common act of humanity. You are entirely free from any obligation to either of us, and a perfect silence on the subject would have been less offensive than the thanks we have received from you. It is far from my intention to irritate or excite any one to those unhappy dissensions which have been too long the disgrace and misfortune of our native home."

Costanza regarded the speaker with a look which amply repaid his forbearance; and, with respectful salutations to all the party, the young men retired.

The countess Caltabellotta had reached the door of the church; but Sigismund, fearful of an angry debate, requested some

his friends to see her safely back to her station by the altar, whilst he escorted the dyes to the castle. Costanza was fully occupied by her mother, and scarcely regarded the distress under which the count laboured; but on their arrival, instantly withdrew to their apartment.

The baroness was too much overpowered by illness to speak, and her daughter turned only a silent acknowledgment to the regrets and confused excuses of don gismund, who, having seen them home, was obliged to return to his station in the church.

The remainder of the ceremonies passed without his regards being attracted by any of them; his thoughts were occupied by Costanza alone. Her beauty had made a deep and instantaneous impression upon him; her manners had fascinated and entranced him: even in the unfortunate occurrences of the morning, he saw nothing but the excess of her filial affection; yet he thought she was unjustly offended. Unwilling to fix the blame upon him,

self, he tried to throw it wholly on the interference of Perollo; still Costanza was evidently displeased at his conduct, and the sense of her disapprobation was become a feeling he could with difficulty support. Too well aware of his mother's irascible temper, he feared to provoke her, by inquiring into the origin of the encounter with the family of Perollo, and sought, by every excuse, to palliate his own conduct, that he might hereafter be prepared to make his peace with his offended mistress. It was from those around him that he learned the conclusion of the ceremony, and his mother's voice recalled his recollection to the necessary attention which his friends required.

From the church they all repaired, according to immemorial custom, to the Castel di Luna, where a banquet awaited them. The inquiries sent by don Sigismund to the apartment of the baroness, were answered by the information that she was somewhat better, though still languid and ill.

“A pleasant encounter, don Sigismund,” said Adriano, “with the hopeful heir of Giacomo Perollo; he seems inclined to pay his earliest *devoirs* to your future bride.”

“An accident upon their journey hither,” replied Luna, “gave him an opportunity of rendering some service to the baroness Solanto, which, I presume, required her acknowledgments at meeting.”

“The ladies seemed well pleased, methought, with their attentions; a handsome cavalier, with all the airs and insolence of Monteleone’s court about him, may be a dangerous rival, signor.”

Don Sigismund restrained the rising feelings which swelled his bosom, and replied—“The baron di Solanto’s honour, and the lady Costanza’s high principles and worth, would be sufficient assurances against such supposition.”

“The insolent intrusion of Giacomo’s wife,” said the countess, “could have no connexion with the boy’s helping the

ladies through a thunder-storm, and requires both explanation and apology."

"As fellow-countrywomen, probably, the baroness Solanto might recognize an old acquaintance in the mother of young Perollo."

The subject was discussed with some asperity by various members of the party; the count however appeared to relapse into abstraction, and the whole passed off heavily.

In the evening Sigismund made his personal inquiries after the state of the baroness; he was however admitted no further than her anti-room, and was informed that she still continued too much indisposed to see any one but her daughter, and that the repeated inquiries after the arrival of vessels indicated an anxiety which, it was to be feared, would very much retard her recovery.

The count hesitated for a few moments, but unable to bear the state of suspense which the idea of Costanza's displeasure had thrown him into, he requested a short

interview with her. His wish was immediately complied with; but as she entered from her mother's chamber, he almost felt a desire that it had been denied, her appearance having entirely obliterated from his memory the apologies he had resolved to make.

Costanza advanced, and seemed awaiting some communication of importance—"It is with the greatest regret, signora," he began, "that I learn the continuance of the baroness's indisposition, and her increasing anxiety respecting your father's safety."

"My mother, I am happy to say, is as well as I could rationally expect, after the fatigue she was this morning so unnecessarily exposed to, and her weakness naturally makes her less able to endure my father's protracted absence."

"I do indeed lament," replied Sigismund, "that our solicitations should have subjected her excellenza to the distressing circumstances which have occurred, and

which, could they have been foreseen, no inducement should have urged me to expose her to; conscious of having been accessory to the increase of her unfortunate indisposition, it is almost impossible for me to hope for your pardon and forgiveness."

" It is not to yourself, count Luna, that I so much attribute my mother's present sufferings, as to the violence and outrage of the countess Caltabellotta; from her the first apology should come. My good opinion is, I fear, of little consequence, or it might have restrained those intemperate sallies with which the essential services we have received from signor Perollo were returned; to him I consider your repentance should be addressed, as well as to my mother."

" Do me not injustice, signora," answered Luna; " there is no sacrifice my honour will permit that I would not willingly and joyfully perform, to prove the influence which even during our short acquaintance you have established over me.

I was intemperate, violent, and rude; I willingly confess Perollo's superiority; I gratefully acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to him; but if you knew or felt the numberless insults and irritating opposition with which his family have for ages followed all the house of Luna, you would perhaps look with a more lenient eye on my offences of to-day. For my mother, her every thought and affection are centered in me; the honour of our race is the first and leading principle within her, and if she does regard our bitter and inveterate foes with indignation and abhorrence, much surely may be allowed to her impetuous warmth—to habits which are now too deeply grafted in her breast ever to be subdued or mollified; yet the same ardent and unrestrained feelings which swell within her bosom to those she regards as inimical to Luna and Peralta, rush, with no abated tide of love and self-devotion, to all within the pale of her affections."

"I can indeed," replied Costanza, "with gratitude to Heaven acknowledge that no such deadly and inveterate hatred is intelligible to my feelings, as would induce me to receive with insult and disdain the providential services of one who could have offended only through his ancestors; nor can I understand why the insults which your excellenza's forefathers received should restrain my mother's feelings of affection at the sight of an old and early friend, although that friend be united with Perollo's house. I have, my lord, been hitherto the child of fond and doting parents; their mild commands have been delivered with gentleness and love, and, I hope, obeyed with affection and duty. The imperious tone assumed by the countess I am not prepared either to receive or submit to."

"Let not Sigismund di Luna, lady, be the first then to excite those feelings of dislike and hatred in your bosom," answered the count; "and for my mother's unguarded and ill-timed vehemence, ac-

cept the sorrow which I know she will experience when reflection has convinced her of her error."

" Your contrition and apology, signor, ought to be addressed to others as well as to me. How far the countess Caltabel-lotta may intend to make the only amends which now remain to those whom her rudeness and impatience have insulted, I fear you cannot decide; for me perhaps it is unreasonable to expect concessions, situated as I may be hereafter with relation to your mother, and somewhat guilty on the same subject, by hastily replying to what I considered an outrage to my mother, as well as to myself; but with respect to the baroness, though her gentle spirit and courteous manners may not insist on the performance, yet nothing but the humblest apology, both to her and her friend the baroness Pandolfini, should be offered. Yet one thing further, signor: permit me to assure you that any repetition of such conduct as I have witnessed

from the countess more than once since our arrival here, will terminate all intercourse between us, as far as I am personally concerned. The baron Solanto has ever been too kind a father to force his daughter's inclinations, and she inherits from him a spirit which insolence will never tame, nor violence conciliate."

" If the lady Costanza ever honours our house by her alliance, no other influence will, I hope, be necessary to induce her than that of Sigismund di Luna, whose days thenceforth shall proudly be dedicated to anticipate her every wish, and shield her from every annoyance. Anxious as my mother is to insure the happiness of her son, she may, I hope, be forgiven, if in some few instances she oversteps the laws of moderation."

" In you, signor, the countess has every right to expect an advocate, and you do not deceive her expectations ; but for myself, I own I contemplate the idea of a residence with her, away from the indul-

gence of my parents, with a degree of terror it would be difficult to describe to you."

" And do you imagine, lovely Costanza, that, left under my protection entirely. I should not insist on every thing giving place to your happiness ? Nay, do not leave me the moment I presume to mention myself. The short time you have been here, the baron's unfortunate absence, and the baroness's illness (not to mention my poor mother's vehemence, which, I fear, drives you from us), have given me so little of the indulgence of your society, that though the interest your every word and action have excited in me, are, I believe, already ineffaceable, still to you I seem a stranger; and forgive my complaining a little, that you so entirely treat me as such, and consider my feelings on every occasion connected with yourself less than those of any other person."

While speaking, don Sigismund had gently and respectfully taken the hand of his fair mistress, and seemed waiting for

a reply, which she every moment felt less certain how to make, for she had prepared herself for ill humour in the count, instead of candour and submission, and knew not whether she should seem too much interested in *him*, if she accepted his apology immediately, or too much governed by resentment, if she refused, and felt besides, notwithstanding her anger, that his opinion of her was not quite a matter of indifference.

In this state of indecision she stood for more than a minute, her hand still in Luna's, who gazed on her with delight, and almost feared lest her return to self-possession should break a spell, and render her again indignant. At last he said—“ May I then hope you will forgive me for envying to others the smiles of friendliness you are so careful of bestowing on me ?”

“ Count Luna, I am perfectly willing to accept your apologies for yourself, but the countess must make hers to my mother and the baroness Pando——”

“ Nay, lady, do not name her. Sorry am I for it, but death would be preferable to my mother. Dearest Costanza! be generous as you are lovely, and accept an apology to your own amiable mother, which, I am sure, the countess Luna will, of her own accord, make to-morrow morning as soon as she can see her.”

“ Well, my lord, then do persuade the countess to be more gentle, and it shall be as you wish. Good-night!”

“ Must you leave me so instantly?”

“ Yes, my lord, immediately.”

“ Good-night, then, lady Costanza! I trust to-morrow will bring to the baroness revived health, and your father.”

END OF VOL. I.

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